



At the Parting of the Ways

Rev. Francis X. Lasance



Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.

Excerpted from...

THE
CATHOLIC GIRL'S GUIDE
COUNSELS AND DEVOTIONS
FOR
GIRLS IN THE ORDINARY WALKS OF LIFE,
AND IN PARTICULAR FOR
THE CHILDREN OF MARY.

EDITED BY THE
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Editor's Foreword

We trust that this little book will appeal to Pastors, and Directors of sodalities, to the Children of Mary in particular and to all Catholic girls in general.

To Pastors this little guide will supply suggestive reading for exhortations; to Directors and Prefects of sodalities it will lend assistance by means of its *Conferences*; to the *Children of Mary* in particular and to all Catholic girls in general it will furnish helpful spiritual reading at home, and serve also as a complete Prayer-Book, specially adapted to their needs, in all their devotions at church.

The *Conferences*, in connection with other pious exercises, originally appeared in German under the title *Mit ins Leben*. Their author is the Rev. P. Coelestin Muff, O.S.B., of Einsiedeln, Switzerland. This good Religious speaks to young women from a heart that glows with charity, and is consumed with zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

We see in him a man of God and a man of culture—one who is broad-minded and large-hearted, wise and sympathetic, with the experience of years as a Director of young girls in a Catholic Institute.

We revised the English translation of the *Conferences*, eliminated parts of the original matter that seemed to us undesirable, added a few new features, substituted portions of well-known hymns in place of some of the author's verses, and endeavored to bring the whole book into greater harmony with the views and customs of Catholics in our own country.

The latter part of this volume, consisting of Devotions, Prayers, and Pious Exercises, is mainly our own compilation and adaptation and was prepared with a view to making the book more generally useful.

At the end are added Father Clarke's short but very excellent and practical Meditations on the Life of Mary for the Month of May.

May our dear *Lady of the Sacred Heart*, the *Queen of the Most Holy Rosary*, deign to accept this little volume, which we most humbly dedicate to her; may she from her heavenly throne bless this work, so that it may be a firm guide to her servants and her children in the way of perfection.

F.X. Lasance

Notre Dame Convent,
Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary—
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“The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.”

—*1 Cor. 3:34.*

“Be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity.”

—*1 Tim. 4:12.*

“Listen attentively, my daughter, to the words of thy teacher, incline the ear of thy heart to them, receive with a good will the admonitions of a loving father, and strive earnestly to put them into practice.”

—*St. Benedict.*

At the Parting of the Ways

*In life's bright morn I see thee depart
I see thee go, with a trembling heart;
Farewell, sweet maid, so joyous and free,
God's blessing ever abide with thee.*

*When thou dost stand where the ways divide,
May the angel guardian be beside,
God grant thou may'st choose the narrow way,
And from it thy footsteps never stray.*



Which Is My Path?

1. The Decision to Be Made.



Let us suppose that, while traveling in a foreign country, you come to a spot where one road stretches straight before you, another leads to the right, and a third to the left. It is then indeed very important for you to know which road you ought to take in order to reach your destination.

Now, you have really set out upon such a journey; your whole life is truly a journey to heaven. Perhaps you have already reached a spot where the ways part, or you may soon arrive at such a place; you will be obliged to come to a decision, and choose one of the three roads. But which are you to choose? Are you to marry, to go into religion, or to live unmarried in the world? All three roads have one and the same goal—they all lead to heaven. But each has its own special difficulties and obstacles, which every one is not equally able to surmount. Those only can do this who have the requisite qualifications, and receive the necessary graces from God. He who enters upon one of these paths without the necessary graces and qualifications can scarcely hope to get to heaven.

Perhaps you have already reached some spot where a decision must be made, or you may soon arrive at it. You must

make your choice and enter upon one of the three different paths. Consider the importance of this decision, in order that you may choose the right way.

People speak of condition or state of life, and calling; these expressions have a certain similarity, but they are not identical. By calling is understood more properly the relation in which each individual stands to society. When one inquires as to a man's calling, one does not mean to ask whether he is to marry, live single, or go into religion, but whether he is to be a shoemaker, baker, tailor, or an artisan of any description; whether he is to be a doctor, lawyer, tutor, or embrace any other learned profession. These various callings are to society what, in a manner, the different members are to the human body. Society is sound and prosperous when the various callings are properly filled and carried out, as the human body is well when all its parts are in a normal condition and regularly perform their functions. Yet in the sense we have attached to the word, it cannot be said that the salvation of the soul directly depends upon the calling of which choice may be made. Whether you become a stenographer, a dressmaker, or a postmistress may be very important as far as your temporal welfare is concerned, but as far as your eternal happiness is in question, the decision is of no direct moment.

How widely different a matter is the choice of a state in life! The all-wise providence of God orders and arranges everything. His merciful eye beholds all creatures He has made, all ages and places, nations and families, from all eternity. He knows the needs of each individual and of every nation, He foresees peace and war, plenty and famine, all generations that are to come, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. He has endowed each individual man with an immortal soul, gifted with such special capabilities as will enable him to attain his destined goal. And God permits body and soul to develop in a manner corresponding to this appointed end.

When a young person comes to the parting of the ways, the call of God makes itself heard more or less plainly, sometimes by external means, sometimes by a voice speaking within: "I have destined thee to be the father or mother of a family; upon thee I shall bestow a vocation to the religious life; I intend thee to live unmarried in the world." Thus the call of God is addressed to each one, though in widely varying ways. One hears it in his own heart from early childhood, another only when the moment of decision arrives. God calls some person suddenly by means of some unusual event, others, and these constitute by far the largest number, through the circumstances and relations of their life.

How exceedingly important it is to recognize and to follow the call of God. All men have been created in order that they may love God and keep His commandments while they are on earth, and be happy forever with Him in heaven; such is the chief end of man, his final goal. The commandments of God are the same everywhere and for all men, but all have not the same difficulty in keeping them. The same state of life is not suited for every one, nor can every one experience the same facility in reaching heaven, whatever be the state of life he may embrace.

If you are called to live unmarried, you would find it difficult to save your soul if you were to marry. If, on the other hand, it is your duty to marry, the unmarried state would prove a great hindrance in your journey to heaven. And if it is the will of God that you should become an inmate of the cloister, you could scarcely save your soul in the world. The same rule applies to the marriage state, in which the character of the husband you choose is of the utmost importance. St. Gregory of Nazianzen says: "He who errs as to his vocation will go from one mistake to another all his life long, and in the end perhaps find himself deceived in regard to his hope of reaching heaven."

It is easy to perceive the reason of this. If a young girl refuses to follow the clear call of God because to do so would cost her a considerable sacrifice, and she therefore follows her own will—for instance, if she contracts a marriage forbidden by the Church—she will not receive the graces appertaining to the state she has chosen, for the very reason that she has acted contrary to the will of God. She will be unhappy all her life, and, failing some very special intervention of Providence, be unhappy also during the countless ages of eternity.

You have as yet perhaps not reached the parting of the ways, and years may elapse before the moment for a decision arrives. You may already be filled with anxious dread lest you should make a wrong choice, and wreck your prospects of happiness. But fear not, be of good courage! There is a sure and simple means of choosing aright. In the meantime be truly chaste and pious, and your choice cannot fail to be a happy one.

*By various ways God doth intend
To bring man to his final end;
One only way is traced for thee,
To lead thee to eternity.*

2. Useful Advice.



When a priest contemplates the youthful members of his flock, he often asks himself, with a heavy heart, what will become of them. And I now ask myself about you who are going to read the present chapter, whether you will persevere in your good resolutions, whether you will be happy in this world, and get to heaven at last. I cannot tell; I can only wish most ardently that so it may be. But one thing I do know; you will probably find happiness, and save your soul, if you choose the state of life for which you are destined by God. Therefore I am anxious to do everything which lies in my power to help you to choose wisely and well. Lay carefully to heart the useful advice I shall endeavor to give you in this chapter.

My first piece of advice is to take counsel with yourself. You must do this calmly, without prejudice. Your heart should resemble a delicately balanced pair of scales; you must weigh all things fairly. You must not try to discover where and how you can most speedily grow rich and enjoy the vanities and amusements of the world. A girl who, when choosing a state of life, should take counsel of herself in such a fashion as this, and see things from a purely material point of view, without reference to God and to her eternal salvation, would be greatly in danger of making a bad choice. Therefore I beseech you not to expose yourself to any such risk.

Take counsel with yourself in such a manner as will enable you to say to God in a spirit of resignation: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. I desire nothing but what is Thy will. If only I can do Thy will it is a matter of indifference to me

whether I am rich or poor, whether happiness or sorrow is my portion, whether my life is full of work or spent in ease and without exertion. All this is of no consequence, if only I can please Thee, O my God, and save my soul in the end."

In this resigned frame of mind examine yourself; review your characteristics, peculiarities, and inclinations, good and bad; think over your past; notice what are your passions and temptations; consider the strength or weakness of your will. Then compare with all this the duties, difficulties, and dangers of the state of life upon which you purpose to enter. If you feel compelled to say to yourself: "When I remember the weakness of my will and the force of the temptations which assail me, I do not think that I am capable of fulfilling the duties of that state, or of overcoming the difficulties which it presents," it becomes plain that this road to heaven is too steep for you.

Consider your case as you would that of a friend who had similar faults and the same inclinations. One is usually more unprejudiced in regard to others than one can hope to be if the matter under consideration is of a personal nature. Why should you not feel the same affection for yourself as you do for a friend? Why should you not take counsel with yourself in the same manner in which you would seek to advise her?

Act in respect to yourself as you will wish you had done when you come to lie upon your death-bed. There can be no safer rule than this. For in the presence of death matters are viewed in their true light, and no longer seen through colored glasses. How extremely foolish it would be to embrace a state of life which would furnish cause for bitter repentance in your last hours!

My second piece of advice is: Take counsel with others. But who is to counsel you, and to whom ought you to listen? Here great caution is necessary; there are counselors who present themselves unasked, and to whom it would be wrong to listen. On no account lend your ear to bad Catholics, to persons who

have no faith or who have not a good reputation. In regard to the supernatural their understanding is either darkened or extinguished altogether; the eyes of their mind are blind as far as the eternal truths are concerned; how then could they advise others, how point out to them the right road to heaven? There are yet other counselors to whom it would be most inadvisable to listen. I mean worldly persons, who are entirely absorbed in material things. For higher interests they have no perception; their thoughts are set upon nothing else but money, honors, and pleasures. Persons of this class usually deplore the entrance of a girl into religion.

Nor ought you to listen to the advice of those who have anything to gain or lose from your choice in a worldly point of view. A wealthy unmarried lady returned upon a certain occasion a very curt answer to an interested adviser who sought her hand in marriage. He implored her to make him the happiest of mortals, reminding her that marriages are made in heaven. "That is the very reason," she briefly replied, "why I wish to wait until we both get there!" Finally, do not be advised by persons who know nothing about the state of life that you may be thinking of adopting, as, for instance, the religious state. Their ignorance imbues them with the most absurd ideas and vehement prejudices, in regard to such a state of life. How could they form a correct judgment?

From whom, then, are you to seek counsel? Holy Scripture exhorts you: "Keep continually to a wise man, who fears the Lord." It is very important to remember this when the choice of a state of life is under consideration. And why is it so? Because he who desires to give good advice must often offend this or that individual with regard to whose interests the results of his advice may prove to be prejudicial. For instance, there are families which, being influenced by worldly motives and advantages, insist upon the daughter choosing some particular state of life, or marrying some person they have fixed upon, though she does not feel herself called by God to coin-

cide with their views. If counsel is sought from persons who fear man rather than God, what misery may not be the consequence of following their advice, since in giving it they view things from a purely human standpoint. Parents are as a rule the natural advisers of their children, and God has ordained that such they should be. But there are exceptional cases in which they rank among the evil counselors I have enumerated above; and in these instances their advice cannot be relied upon.

Under all circumstances your best adviser is plainly your confessor. You ought not only to ask his advice, but faithfully to follow it. He knows you as no one can know you, except God alone; he knows your good and bad qualities and inclinations. Therefore do not, in your youthful folly, be influenced by the fear that his advice will not coincide with your own wishes. Rather give thanks to God that you have at least one friend whose intentions are pure, whose motives are disinterested, and who will be able to prevent you from making a fatal mistake. Consult your confessor and take his advice; that is the best way of ensuring happiness.

*When thou shalt come where the two ways part,
Pause and consider where thou art;
Ask counsel, seek God's will to know
As to the path where thy steps should go.*

3. The Means to Make a Wise Choice.



Every one desires to choose aright, but how many young persons there are who are so unfortunate as to make a wrong choice! A girl who had not long left school made the acquaintance of a young man who was not only very well off, but appeared to be all that was desirable. She married him, imagining that she had made a fortunate choice. But on the evening of her wedding-day she discovered how terribly she had been deceived. In all simplicity she showed her husband a beautiful statue of the Mother of God, which had been given her as a souvenir of the occasion. He snatched it from her roughly, and dashed it to the ground, saying as he did so: “We have done with these follies; remember that for the future!” And I regret to say this poor girl’s tears were realized, for her married life proved to be most unhappy.

May you be more fortunate, not only if you should marry, but in your choice of a state in general. To this end follow the practical advice I gave you in the previous chapter and make use of the means I am about to point out to you.

In the first place, direct your heart constantly toward heaven. Have but one desire, namely, to know and to do the will of God. God will then bestow His grace upon you, and you will be certain to make a wise choice. No one must count upon an extraordinary call, such as the apostles and many great saints received. Those were very special gifts of grace, which you cannot expect. But if you keep your eye and heart constantly

directed toward God, He will enlighten you with His grace, will give you prudent counselors, and so ordain external circumstances that you may, if I can thus express it, be led by the hand of your guardian angel to enter the state of life God intends for you.

Truly the ways of God are wonderful and manifold. Sometimes He impresses on the heart of a young child a desire for a particular state. Consequently, later on in life there can arise no question as to making a choice, the question having already been decided. To others He signifies His will only when a choice has to be made; and these often enter with joy of spirit into a state for which they had long experienced a rooted aversion.

In the second place, keep your soul pure. A very great deal—everything, indeed—depends upon this. The brighter and more transparent is the glass of a window, the more readily do the rays of the sun penetrate into the room; but the dimmer the glass, the darker will the apartment be. The soul may be compared to glass, to a mirror, into which the beams of divine grace shine, and in which they are reflected. If you desire to be enlightened from on high in your choice of a state of life, keep your heart clean, preserve therein the bright light of innocence. If this light is obscured or extinguished by sin, delay not to rekindle it by means of contrition and confession.

In the third place, be diligent in prayer. From what has already been said you must plainly perceive that prayer is of the utmost importance in choosing a state of life. For, on the one hand, you seek to choose the state of life which will best promote your eternal salvation; on the other, the world, the flesh, and the devil strive to decoy you into taking the wrong road.

There are two epochs in the life of every individual when the devil lays snares for him with particular cunning. The first is when he ceases to be a child; then comes the crisis, the critical period when the result of previous training will show in the

innocence and purity of the youth or maiden, or the reverse be unhappily the case. I believe this critical period has already passed with you; I confidently hope you have successfully withstood the test and preserved your innocence.

But with yet greater cunning and force will the devil attack you either now or a few years hence when you come to choose a state of life. Should he succeed in inducing you to take the wrong road, he will expect to emerge victorious from your final, death-bed struggle. Therefore, my dear child, pray, pray! Pray for light, that the mists may disperse and the road of life stretch clearly before you; pray for strength to resist your passions whatever sacrifices it may cost you; pray simply that you may know and do the will of God.

In the fourth place, receive frequently and worthily the Sacraments of Penance and of the Altar. These Sacraments will maintain the purity of your soul, and the Giver of grace will descend into your heart with His light and strength. After each communion entreat Our Lord, with earnestness and confidence, to teach you what are the designs of His Sacred Heart in regard to you, and to strengthen you to make any sacrifice that may be necessary. And on your communion days give some time to serious reflection. Imagine that you are stretched upon your death-bed. Ask yourself if you were in that awful hour what state of life you would wish you had chosen. Would it not be a cause of bitter regret if you had acted in accordance with your own self-will, instead of following the advice of your confessor?

I cannot refrain from mentioning one more means for arriving at a right decision, namely, a true, filial, confiding love and devotion to Mary. On the present occasion I will only make two brief remarks in regard to this devotion. If you desire wisdom and enlightenment concerning the choice of a state of life, the surest way to obtain it is through Mary, for she is "*Sedes sapientiae*," the "Seat of wisdom." And if you wish to

attain eternal salvation, the surest way to realize this is through Mary, for, as a great saint tells us, “a true servant of Mary can never be lost.”

Do not imagine that thoughts like these are suited only for a young woman who is about to enter the cloister. These reflections are not intended for this one or that one, but for all who desire to choose aright so as to ensure their eternal salvation.

As you ought to beware of rashness in choosing a state of life, so ought you to guard against over anxiety. Do not lose heart in presence of the momentous decision. Make use of the means I have pointed out to you; look constantly toward Heaven. Keep your soul pure; be diligent in prayer; frequently approach the sacraments; practice devotion to Mary; regard her as your Mother; and look with cheerful confidence into the future. Eternal peace and joy follow the earthly struggle. The way of the cross leads to the crown of immortal glory.

*'Tis Thy good pleasure, not my own,
In Thee, my God, I love alone;
And nothing I desire of Thee
But what Thy goodness wills for me.
O will of God, O will divine,
All, all our love be ever Thine.*

*In love no rival canst Thou bear,
But Thou art full of tend'rest care;
And fire and sweetness all divine
To hearts which once are wholly Thine.*

*Thou makest crosses soft and light,
And death itself seem sweet and bright;
No cross nor fear that soul dismays,
Whose will to Thee united stays.*

*To Thee I consecrate and give
My heart and being while I live;
Jesus, Thy heart alone shall be
My love for all eternity.*

*Alike in pleasure and in pain
To please Thee is my joy and gain;
That, O my Love, which pleases Thee
Shall evermore seem best to me.
May heaven and earth with love fulfil,
My God, Thy ever blessed will.*



The Married State.

1. Ought I to Marry?



Of the three paths before you when you stand at the parting of the ways one leads straight onward; it is the shortest, most direct way to heaven, and is known as the Religious life. The second trends away to the right; it also leads to the same bright, eternal goal, by a slightly circuitous route; it is the state of the unmarried in the world. The third road leads away to the left, into a hilly region; there are many pleasures and joys to be met with on that way, and also much toil and many sorrows; that is the married state. All these three states, I repeat most emphatically, are ordained by God; but any state is not fitted for any individual. Neither is it a matter of indifference to almighty God which state in life we choose for ourselves.

We will now consider each of these three states in turn in order to aid you in making a wise choice. The reason why I speak first of the married state is simply because a great majority of mankind is called to this state, and therefore it suggests itself first to our consideration. Now, the decisive question presents itself: Are you called to the married state? Ought you to marry? Let me suggest to you a few serious thoughts.

The answer to the question, “Ought you to marry?” depends

upon another question: Do you think yourself capable of fulfilling the duties of the married state? In order to answer this question you must learn what these duties really are; and I will now proceed briefly to set them before you.

One of the chief among these duties requires that husband and wife should live together in concord, love, and conjugal fidelity until death. They must remain together, since marriage is indissoluble. Only when it pleases almighty God to sever the bond by taking husband or wife out of this world may the survivor marry again.

How should married people live together? First of all in peace and harmony. They should aim at, and strive after, one and the same things; they should seek to lead a Christian life, serving God faithfully and helping each other on the way to heaven. For this end they must be united, avoiding anger, quarreling, and dissension; otherwise they will embitter their life and make it a sort of hell upon earth. Nor can they escape hell in the world to come unless they repent and amend.

The following apposite anecdote may be related here. Two married persons who lived unhappily together carried their dispute one day so far as to come to blows. A neighbor who heard what was going on suddenly shouted: "Fire! Fire!" The quarrel was forgotten; husband and wife eagerly inquired where the fire was burning. "In hell," was the unexpected reply, "and thither married people must go who persist in living in enmity, anger and dissension."

Married people should live together in love, not in strife and in quarreling. They should endeavor to please each other, they should pray for each other, have patience and bear with each other's faults. When some grievance presents itself they should not complain to others, but mutually forgive and become reconciled.

And they should live in conjugal fidelity, keeping the promises they solemnly made at the altar. The wife must not

fix her affections on any other man; the husband must not seek after any other woman; else will they be in danger of committing one of the most grievous and terrible of sins, a sin which God punishes very severely.

Another important duty is that of mutual edification. Husband and wife should set each other a good example, seeking each to sanctify the other, and walk together on the heavenward road. Such is the highest aim and object of a union which a sacrament has rendered holy. Christ loved His own unto the end, and, moreover, in such a manner that they should attain their own final salvation. So must the wife love her husband, and the husband his wife—in such a way that they may both attain their final end, eternal blessedness. They should therefore unite in prayer, attend divine worship together, and receive the sacraments at the same time. If they do this the blessing of God will assuredly rest upon them.

Difficult and important as are those duties of married people which we have already considered, the most difficult, and at the same time the most important of all, is doubtless that of the bringing up their children in the fear of God. When the Last Judgment comes we who are priests and confessors shall not be judged in the same way as ordinary individuals; we shall not only have to answer for what we have personally done or left undone, but we shall have further to give account of the souls committed to our care. In precisely the same manner shall fathers and mothers be judged; not merely in regard to what their own lives have been, but as to the manner in which they have brought up their children. If these latter are doomed to perdition through the bad education they have received from their parents, they shall hang like millstones round the neck of their father or mother, sinking them yet deeper into the abyss of hell.

This difficult duty of the education of children, and the heavy responsibility attaching to it, is sufficient of itself to

make you, Christian maiden, seriously reflect before answering the question "Ought I to marry?" in the affirmative.

If this duty of education is so difficult and burdensome for the father, it is doubly and trebly so for the mother. For the physical and spiritual training of children depends, in their earliest years at least, almost exclusively upon her. How great a load of trouble and anxiety, grief and suffering, must rest upon a mother until her four, six, eight, or even more children can feed and dress themselves, until they are to a certain extent independent of her! Since the day when God said to the mother of the human race: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power," the life of every wife and mother has been a life of constant sacrifice and renunciation, full of sorrows and trials.

My dear daughter, "Ought you to marry?" To sum up everything in a few words, I would say to you: If you have courage to make great sacrifices, if you are very fond of children, if you feel that you could readily submit to the will of another, if you are sound and healthy in both mind and body, if you are sufficiently versed in household matters and have attained the proper age (I would say the age of twenty), then you may marry if you consider yourself called to the wedded state rather than to an unmarried life in the world. May God enlighten, guide, and bless you! And may the words of Solomon be exemplified in your case: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up, and called her blessed; her husband and he praised her."

2. Whom Should I Marry?



If you, Christian Maiden, have attained a suitable age, feel yourself called to the married state, and receive offers of marriage, the important questions arise: Whom should I marry or to whom ought I to become engaged, and to what ought I principally to look? I will endeavor to give practical answers to these questions.

Always look in the first place to religion, virtue and uprightness. Never make an intimate acquaintance with a man of whose antecedents you know nothing, and in regard to whom you are unable to obtain reliable information. On no account allow yourself to be lulled into security by fair speeches, solemn assurances, and brilliant promises on the part of a stranger, or of one who has lived only for a few months in the place where you live. I entreat you to believe me when I tell you that it is impossible to be too cautious in regard to strangers. Many a young wife has prepared unhappiness for both herself and her parents by carelessness in this respect, and by allowing herself to be over-persuaded by a flattering and insinuating suitor.

Therefore I once again repeat: look only to virtue, uprightness, devotedness to our holy Church, and genuine religious sentiments. If you hear anything indicating the contrary from a reliable source or notice anything for yourself, act as did a young French lady. She was engaged to be married, and was spending the evening before her wedding-day in the company of her betrothed and some relatives. He began to make jocular and contemptuous remarks about religion. His intended gen-

tly rebuked him, but he jestingly replied that a man of the world could not afford to be so particular in such matters. Grieved and shocked, Elizabeth (that was the young lady's name) declared that she would not marry him. "For," she said, "he who does not love God will not love his wife truly and faithfully." Nor could the united persuasions of her parents and her lover induce her to swerve from her resolution. And I think she was perfectly right; let her maxim be yours also.

Never become engaged to a man who is careless about fulfilling his religious duties, who absents himself from Mass on days of obligation without sufficient cause, or who mocks at priests and matters connected with religion. Never keep company with a young fellow who likes to spend his time in taverns, drinking and gambling; who keeps late hours at night, neglects his work; or who has a very violent temper. Give up at once a man who does not respect your innocence, but allows himself to take liberties and to be unduly familiar with you.

Let innocence be your greatest treasure, your only source of pride, and promptly turn away from any one who with poisonous breath or profane hand would tarnish the brightness of your purity.

You must also consider in choosing a husband the external circumstances of your suitor, and whether the contrast between his position and your own is not too great. Too great a disparity of age is to be avoided; a marriage rarely turns out well when the wife is much older than the husband. Never permit your marriage tie to be degraded into a mere business transaction. I chanced to read of an instance of the kind in a newspaper the other day. A very wealthy man wanted to get a son-in-law still richer than himself. He met with a young man to suit his ideas, and proposed to give him, in the event of his marrying his daughter, a very handsome sum as her dowry. The gentleman, however, who probably loved money more than he loved the girl, demanded a still larger sum. The

squabble which ensued was a long one; at length the bargain was satisfactorily concluded, and the wedding took place. The young lady does not appear to have been more sensible or noble-minded than her parent; or else she would have said to him: “Father, you can do with your money what you please, but this sordid fellow shall not have me! I want a husband who wishes to marry *me*, not my *money*!”

You may perhaps ask whether you are not to pay any heed to the question of money or income in selecting a husband. Most certainly you are; no sensible girl ought to marry a man whose calling and pecuniary circumstances do not afford a guarantee that he will be able to support a family decently without help from outside. On the other hand no prudent and sagacious young woman would give her hand to a man *merely* because he is rich, or—this I must add—only on account of his good looks or attractive manners. But if two suitors are equally good and religious it is quite justifiable to choose the richer and more pleasing.

Another objection you may raise is this: if young girls are to be so critical and fastidious in the choice of a husband they will end by getting none at all! And in my opinion it would be a very good thing for a great many if this should prove to be the case! However, good, clever young women have nothing to fear.

For although no statistics can be obtained on this head, it may safely be asserted that among young men who are called to the married state there are quite as many, if not more, good and worthy individuals as there are among young women who likewise wish to marry. And this proceeds from the existing conditions of society. For many of the best, most intelligent and clever girls do not feel themselves called to marry, but either to enter the cloister or to live unmarried in the world. In the case of young men, almost all, with the exception of the comparatively small number of those who become priests or

go into religion, are so situated as to find it desirable to enter matrimony and establish their own home. Therefore the more accomplished, pious, and capable maidens are, the better prospect they have of a happy marriage.

In conclusion let me lay stress upon this point: If you are at least twenty years of age you may think of becoming engaged, but not before then. In the meantime let it be your sole effort and aim to love God, to make progress in virtue, to be pious and chaste, and to learn all you can.

*Heart with heart together meeting,
See, they are in concord beating;
Life is long and passion fleeting.
—Schiller.*

3. The Time of Courtship.



Dou are aware that it behooves you at all times to watch and pray and keep strict guard over your innocence, but never is this so necessary as when you are receiving the addresses of a young man. That is by far the most dangerous time for young people. If they forget God, the period of their engagement often witnesses the ruin of their innocence, their peace of mind, the happiness of their life. This topic is consequently among the most important for one whose office it is to instruct girls and give them practical advice for their guidance in moral and spiritual matters. Let me tell you plainly what the Christian maiden should think about courtship, and how she ought to conduct herself toward her lover.

A Christian maiden ought to seek to know betimes what is allowed and what is forbidden in regard to courtship. She ought not to wait to know this until she has fallen deeply in love and yielded to improper proposals. In this case the eye of her conscience would be dimmed; it would become impossible for her to judge aright. For those who have already sinned together warnings usually come too late; persuasions, entreaties, exhortations, are equally thrown away; if such persons were to see the abyss of hell yawning before them, or if some one were to rise from the dead to warn them, they would continue to pursue their evil way saying it was impossible for them to desist from it.

“I am determined to go on, however things may turn out,” said a young girl, hitherto good and docile, to her confessor, when the latter endeavored to induce her to give up a most

undesirable acquaintance. And things did turn out very badly indeed, for in a comparatively brief period the wife died in a lunatic asylum and the husband in prison.

Therefore it is important for the girl who feels that it is her vocation to be married to have the right view in regard to courtship, before receiving the attentions of any man.

We cannot approve of any familiar and intimate social intercourse between two young persons of different sexes if the acquaintance is made and carried on without a view to marriage within a reasonable time. If a youth and maiden stand in an intimate relation to each other, and seek to be often alone together, without any idea of a speedy marriage, such a relation must be condemned. It offers as a rule a proximate and voluntary occasion of sins against chastity, and to seek such occasions is in itself a sin. Countless sad examples which meet us in our daily experience prove that relations of this nature are truly a proximate occasion of grievous sin.

Of course it is desirable and even necessary that two young persons who wish to marry each other should become well acquainted, and to this end courtship is quite proper. Even in this case, however, circumstances, may render a continuation of the courtship undesirable, or even actually wrong. For instance, unexpected hindrances may arise that make the marriage impossible, or require it to be indefinitely postponed; and the young persons continue, in spite of this, to meet just as frequently as they did before. Or one of them may allege some frivolous pretext for delaying the marriage. How silly are many girls who allow themselves to be made fools of by young men, and do not, or rather will not, see that their admirers are thinking of anything but marriage.

Again, an acquaintance allowable in other respects becomes sinful and undesirable if the engaged parties, although determined to be married before very long, seek in the meantime to be alone together as often as possible, and at such meetings

3. The Time of Courtship.

always or nearly always commit sins, if not in deed, at least in thought and desire. There is only one way of extricating themselves from so perilous a position; they must either break off the engagement altogether, or arrange never to be left alone and to hasten their marriage. The first alternative will probably appear difficult, if not impossible, but the second can be carried out if only there is a good will.

From all which has been said you must plainly perceive that the period of courtship is fraught with grave dangers for your innocence, and that it calls for the exercise of the greatest prudence. Therefore note well how you ought to conduct yourself in the time of courtship.

(a) Ask advice in regard to your engagement. A priest once warned one of his parishioners not to marry a certain young man. "For," he said, "you know him to be a drunkard, and you must be aware that whenever there is a quarrel he gets mixed up in it." "All he needs is a little management," was the reply; "besides, he is a handsome fellow, and the eye wants something too." Six weeks after her marriage the wife came to the priest with her head bandaged, and said, amid many tears: "Oh Father, my husband has beaten me so dreadfully! My right eye is nearly put out!" Gravely and sadly her confessor made answer: "My poor child, the eye wants something too."

(b) Be sure to mention the fact of your engagement when you go to confession, as much evil may thereby be prevented.

(c) Do not delay your marriage too long. As far as you can, avoid being alone with your betrothed. If his visits are too frequent and too protracted, and if you seek to be alone with him when he calls, it will be nothing short of a miracle if you preserve your chastity.

(d) During the time of your engagement keep strict guard over yourself in regard to your virginal purity, and insist

that your future husband shall also respect it; for this reason avoid all undue familiarity.

Thrice happy will you be if you follow this advice, and can approach the nuptial altar in virginal purity. For this end pray frequently and fervently to the Mother of God, saying: "O Mary, purest of virgins, and my Mother, guide me, guide thy weak child, that I may pass safely through the dangers which beset my youthful steps!"

*Queen of virgins, guard and guide me;
Let me to thine arms repair;
In thy tender bosom hide me;
Mary, take me to thy care.*

4. Marry a Catholic.



St. Jerome relates the following anecdote in regard to St. Marcella, who was left a widow while still quite young. A man of good family, Cerealis by name, wished to marry her, promising to make her sole heiress of his large fortune if she would accept his hand. Her mother urged her to close with the brilliant offer, but she replied: “If I had not determined never to marry again, I should look out for a *husband*, rather than a *fortune*.”

You, Christian maiden, ought to be of the same opinion; when the time comes to choose a husband, do not think too much about riches and temporal interests. Pay all the more attention to another point, which is perhaps the most important of all: marry only a Catholic. On no account conclude a mixed marriage; therefore avoid engaging yourself to a non-Catholic.

In my earlier instructions I laid great stress upon this head. I shall now enter upon it more at length. For it is of the utmost importance in the present day, when Catholics and Protestants are almost everywhere associated, and Catholic girls are more or less exposed to the danger of becoming acquainted with a non-Catholic whose object is marriage. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that you, as a Catholic, should know what you ought to think about mixed marriages and how you are to avoid them.

First of all it must be remarked that no offence to Protestants is intended when Catholics are warned against marrying

them. Protestants ought to hold similar opinions, looking at the matter from their own point of view, and, indeed, they frequently do. To prove the truth of what has just been said, I will give two extracts, the first from a Protestant newspaper; they are fraught with useful lessons for Catholics. My first quotation runs thus: "A mixed marriage is always a sad mistake, and any one who forms such a union must make up his mind to experience a good deal of trouble and unhappiness. If the children are brought up as Catholics, the Protestant husband or wife must look on while they say their beads, must hear them invoking the saints, both of which things would be found very annoying, even in the case of their own children. If the children are Protestants, discontent and reproaches are sure to follow on the Catholic side; and if some are brought up as Catholics, others as Protestants, the family is divided. Parents and children ought to profess the same faith. People do not marry only to work together, but also to pray together. A Protestant artisan, who had married a Catholic, and whose only child died, expressed himself as follows: 'Standing beside the death-bed of our child, I felt how great a gulf separated my wife from me. We ought to be able, not only to live together, but also to pray together. In my opinion, mixed marriages ought to be forbidden by law.' And, indeed, no one who cares about his own salvation and that of his children ought to contract a mixed marriage."

My second illustration is taken from a pamphlet entitled, "A Word of Warning to Protestants." It runs thus: "How unhappy a wife must be who has been brought up a Catholic and remembers, every time she attends divine worship, that her children are being educated as Protestants; although she believes that her own religion is the only one which leads to heaven! And the opposite case is just as undesirable!

"Nor do I think that the religious discussions which must arise between husband and wife can be very edifying. These discussions can scarcely be avoided if each is in earnest in re-

gard to his or her beliefs. And if religion is to be a forbidden subject, what will become of the children?"

Listen to the decision of the Catholic Church concerning mixed marriages. She has always declared her disapproval of them, and advised, nay commanded, Catholics to avoid contracting them. More than fourteen hundred years ago several Councils, among them those of Elvira, Laodicea, and Chalcedon, forbade Catholics to marry heretics unless the latter promised to become Catholics.

Two special reasons induced and compelled the Catholic Church to come to this decision. In the first place, a union between a Catholic and a Protestant can never be a perfect marriage, can never be what marriage ought to be. For marriage is a sacrament, and should be regarded and treated as such. How can this be so when the Protestant considers matrimony a merely civil contract? Married people should live in the closest union, in the most perfect harmony; they ought to have but one heart and one soul. How can this be when they hold such widely different opinions upon so many points in regard to the most sacred and most important of all subjects, namely, religion? Moreover, married people ought to help one another on the way to heaven. How can they do this when one takes the road which leads to the right, and the other treads the path which turns to the left? Finally, married people ought to give their children a religious education, and they should cooperate in carrying on the good work. Again I ask, how can they do this when their views in regard to religion differ so widely?

The second reason why holy Church looks so unfavorably upon mixed marriages is because the Catholic incurs so great a risk of losing his or her soul. When a Catholic girl marries a man who is not of her faith it is fair to surmise that she is rather lukewarm in regard to her own religion. How easy it is for her when she becomes a wife to neglect her religious duties, and gradually to cease altogether from performing them.

Thence it is only a step to religious indifference, that is, to the erroneous opinion that all religions are alike good; that it does not matter what one believes; that it is of no consequence whether one is a Catholic or a Protestant if only one leads a good life.

And how sad a prospect it is in regard to the Catholic education of the children! The Catholic wife may desire to bring the children up in her own creed, and the Protestant husband has promised that she shall be permitted to do so; but how very often he fails to keep his word.

So you see the truth of the saying I quoted above: "No one who is earnestly concerned about his own salvation and that of his children ought to contract a mixed marriage." Act upon this principle, my daughter—do not listen to the addresses of a non-Catholic.

*A common faith, a common love,
A common hope of life above—
This only can make wedded life
Free from discord, free from strife.*

5. Are Mixed Marriages Happy?



A passage from the writings of Dr. Hirscher, a pious and learned divine, may be suitably introduced here. He says: "There is probably no single instance to be found of a mixed marriage in which (although they may in other respects have lived happily together) husband and wife did not after the lapse of years express the conviction that it would have been better if they had never met. There is a flaw in their mutual relations, a sore place which can never be healed."

A priest who had been in Holy Orders for a quarter of a century, and had exercised his sacred ministry in many different parishes, assured me that he had met with no mixed marriage which could be called completely happy; that many Catholics and Protestants who had contracted unions of this nature had acknowledged to him that if they could have their time over again they would not marry as they had done.

There is one case, not infrequent in occurrence, which renders the marriage of a Catholic wife with a husband who is a non-Catholic extremely unhappy. You know that the Church considers marriage to be indissoluble; she has ordained that neither of the partners in the marriage can marry again during the lifetime of the other. Protestants, on the other hand, regard marriage as a bond which can be dissolved. It is possible that the Protestant husband may institute proceedings in a divorce court for separation from his Catholic wife. Reasons for taking such a step are never far to seek. If the husband marries another woman, the discarded Catholic wife is doomed to drag on a wretched existence; she is, of course, unable to marry

again, and must remain a widow as long as her husband lives. To complete her misery, her children are often taken from her and given into the custody of their father, who does not allow them to have anything to do with their mother.

I will cite one instance out of hundreds which might be brought forward. Many years ago a young girl who had lost both her parents went to reside at Neuenburg with an aunt. Before very long, a Protestant merchant began to pay her attention. At length he asked her to become his wife. The girl hesitated at first because her aunt was opposed to the marriage. Finally the girl consented, but only on the express condition that all the children should be brought up as Catholics. To this the future bridegroom readily agreed, promising to do all which might be required of him; his promise was taken down in writing, and officially legalized.

At first all went on smoothly. But in the course of a few years the husband began to grow somewhat cool toward his wife. He made fun of one and another of her pious habits. When she came home from Mass on a certain Sunday morning, she found that he had removed her crucifix, religious pictures, holy-water font, rosary-beads, and prayer-books from their customary places in the various rooms, and had made a heap of them in an attic. Shortly afterward a child was born. The father had it baptized as a Protestant, and said it was to be brought up as such. With many tears, the unhappy wife reminded him of the solemn promise he had made at the altar in regard to the education of their children. He replied abruptly: "That is my affair; it rests with me to decide what the religion of my children is to be."

Full of bitter grief, the poor mother again went to her aunt's house. While she was staying there her husband procured a divorce and married a rich Protestant widow. His discarded but lawful wife was left with a broken heart, one woman among many who have met with a similar fate. They listened

to the voice of earthly affection alone, or were led solely by worldly motives, and heeded not the teaching of holy Church.

But even when matters do not reach such a pitch as this, no mixed marriage can be said to be really happy in every respect. For the husband and wife are not united in regard to the most sacred and most important of subjects; hence lesser differences are apt to arise. One disparages the other's religion and says: "I wish I had never known you!" If the children do not turn out well the Catholic mother reproaches herself with the failure, and feels how different the case would have been if she had married a pious, helpful Catholic.

Even when the wife is, and continues to be, a good Catholic, in the vicissitudes of married life a hundred reflections occur to her mind on the score of religion, tending to prevent her from enjoying true peace and happiness. How much grief and anxiety must it cause her to know that her husband is on a wrong road; that he lacks the choicest gifts and graces of God in this life, and is in great danger of not attaining eternal happiness in the next life. And should her beloved husband die outside the Church, must not grief and anxiety on account of his soul press heavily indeed upon her heart?

Therefore in a mixed marriage a Catholic wife is always more or less to be pitied, even if she remains a good Catholic. But if she was a careless Catholic at the time of her marriage, and grows gradually more and more indifferent, consenting that her children should receive a Protestant education, she often ends by falling away from the faith altogether. Her marriage may be crowned with the highest temporal felicity, she may live happily with her husband, and they may be held in honor and esteem by their fellow men; yet in spite of all this the conscience of the wife will assail her with many a bitter reproach, and cause her to spend many a gloomy hour. Should she succeed in stifling its voice her case is still worse; it is the lull before the storm, the awful pause before she sinks into

never-ending misery. To such an unhappy wife we may apply Our Lord's warning: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

In whatever light we view the matter it is obvious that a thoroughly happy mixed marriage is a thing very rarely to be found. But when this is represented to a girl who has already listened to the addresses of a non-Catholic, and perhaps fallen madly in love with him, she says that it is looking on the dark side of things; she sees a hundred ways of escaping out of the difficulty; even the most cogent arguments fail to convince her of the perilous nature of the step she is about to take; or, blinded by passion, she may merely reply: "Well, if I knew that I should go to hell I would still marry him and no one else!" Thus it is with the fire of sensual love. Once it has burst out into a blaze nothing but a miracle of grace avails to quench it, nothing else, either in heaven above or on earth below.

Therefore beware of this fire of sensual love. Carefully reflect before accepting the company of a non-Catholic, lest the fire should burst into flames which cannot be extinguished.

*Though love may clasp the nuptial band,
Yet wedded bliss no storm will stand
Unless the selfsame faith both share,
And make God's service their first care.*

6. The Conditions Under Which the Church Tolerates Mixed Marriages.



Dou have learned in the preceding instructions how extremely rare the cases are in which mixed marriages turn out well, and what weighty reasons induce holy Church to signify her disapproval of them. She refrains, however, from prohibiting them altogether, because she is a loving and indulgent mother. It would afflict her maternal heart to witness the sad fate of those Catholics who, blinded by passion, would form mixed marriages, howsoever strictly forbidden, and would thus entirely separate themselves from her. In order to prevent the greater evil she permits the lesser; she tolerates mixed marriages under certain conditions.

These conditions are as follows:

- (1) The marriage must be solemnized according to the rules of the Catholic Church only.
- (2) Both parties must promise to have all their children baptized and brought up as Catholics.
- (3) The non-Catholic must also promise to leave the Catholic free to practice his religion.

This toleration or permission of mixed marriages, or, as it is usually termed, this dispensation, does not imply approval; on the contrary, the Church never ceases to protest against them in the most decided manner. As a rule, she requires of the contracting parties a written promise that the above-mentioned conditions will be faithfully carried out, especially that one

which concerns the Catholic education of the children.

The Church insists so strongly upon this point because it is the chief matter to be thought of in any marriage which her children conclude. To refrain from insisting upon it would be not love and indulgence but treachery to the truth, which can be but one; it would virtually be placing error on a level with truth and allowing Catholics to fall away from the truth, in the persons of their children. Despite the fact that the Church ceases not to lift up her voice in protest through her bishops and priests, a considerable number of the children of mixed marriages are not brought up as Catholics. We can readily understand the feelings of grief and pain which animated a zealous German prelate when he wrote as follows to all young women who enter upon a mixed marriage without the sanction or dispensation of the Church: "The flames of a foolish passion soon die out. Conscience asserts its rights, and a weary struggle begins which prevents family life from being truly happy. The birth of the first child, which ought to be a source of joy to its mother, becomes a cause of sorrow. The child is brought up in an anti-Catholic atmosphere and thus is deprived of the true faith. What stings of conscience must pierce its mother's heart!"

The non-Catholic father, on the other hand, can certainly not find any pleasure in seeing his children taught a creed other than that which he professes. But as either husband or wife must give way on this point, it ought not to be so difficult for the non-Catholic to consent that the children be educated in the Catholic faith as it is for a Catholic to allow her children to be brought up as Protestants. For these latter hold generally that a Christian can save his soul whatever his religious beliefs may be. The Catholic wife, on the other hand, according to her faith, must look upon the Catholic Church as the one, only, true Church, founded by Christ Himself, and she ought therefore to insist that her children shall be brought up in that Church.

Do not allow yourself to be induced to depart from your determination to avoid a mixed marriage, by any plausible theories which may be put forward. For instance, you may be told that Protestants are Christians as well as Catholics, that they agree in essentials, and differ only in minor matters.

This assertion is a false one. Differences exist, not merely in minor matters, but in many most important points. That which the Catholic reveres as heavenly truth the Protestant in many cases regards as a purely human invention. For instance, the Catholic sees in the sacrifice of the Mass an actual renewal of the sacrifice Christ made upon the cross; the Protestant doctrine teaches this to be idolatry. This difference is indeed a most important one, and here unity of religious belief certainly does not exist.

Thus holy Church, as we have seen, tolerates mixed marriages if the above-mentioned three conditions are complied with, more especially if the Catholic education of the children is assured. She grants a dispensation in regard to such marriages, but does not thereby testify her approval of them. But what if the non-Catholic refuses beforehand to consent that the children shall be brought up as Catholics? In this case she refuses to give her consent to the union. How great is the blindness and how grievous the sin of those Catholics who, contrary to the command of God and of the Church, are married before a Protestant minister or the secular authorities; and, setting aside all conscientious scruples, renounce the idea of bringing up their children as Catholics.

*Each state and calling here below
Has its own joy and its own woe;
Yet a godless marriage, though it look fair,
Brings little with it but sorrow and care.*

The conduct of a Catholic girl as set forth in the incident I am about to relate cannot be too highly praised. She served as assistant in the store of a wealthy Protestant merchant. She so won the esteem of her employer and of his two sons that one of the latter offered to marry her, promising to leave her the free exercise of her religion. But the admirable young woman rejected this advantageous proposal simply because she was a Catholic. She preferred to remain a clerk or an employee of any kind rather than to become the wife of a rich man at the price of making a mixed marriage. This was indeed no small sacrifice! Should you ever find yourself in similar circumstances, may you be found ready to make a like sacrifice with a courage equal to hers!



The Religious State.

1. The Happiness of a Religious Vocation



A wonderful sight is this which the Catholic Church has presented to us from the earliest times, and still presents in our own day. We see hundreds of young girls renouncing the riches, honors, and enjoyments of the world in order to shut themselves up for life within the walls and gratings of convents. Other delicate girls we see turning their backs on the comforts of civilized life to go, as Sisters of Charity, into distant lands, there to pass their days amidst strenuous exertions and severe privations, frequently exposed to the greatest perils and almost certain to meet an early death. How is such a life of sacrifice to be explained, a life which the world cannot possibly understand? I can give no other explanation than that which is contained in the Saviour's words: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." And again He says: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?"

But in what manner does the Saviour draw to Himself so many souls, more especially so many virginal souls? He draws them by the secret operation of His grace; He calls them to the Religious state. Christian maiden, give you attention to some remarks concerning this vocation, remarks which well deserve

to be considered. Reflect, in the first place, upon the happiness of this vocation.

The shortsighted world is quite at fault when it pronounces the life of a nun joyless and more or less unhappy. She must, it is true, renounce much which men regard as pleasure and enjoyment, but only to be richly compensated for all she gives up by higher and purer joys. Have you ever seen the husbandman cutting the vine? The process seems to hurt it, and bitter drops, like tears, ooze from the stem; it is done for the good of the vine, to render it more valuable. It is the same with a person who has been called to the Religious state and lives in accordance with it. All the sacrifices she may have to make do but increase her happiness; they cause her to partake more abundantly of that peace of which Our Lord says: "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you." And she experiences the truth of His assurance when He says: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light."

Ponder well another utterance of the Saviour. Peter said: "Behold we have left all things and have followed thee." Jesus, answering, said: "Amen I say to you, there is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel who shall not receive an hundred times as much now in this time: houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands and in the world to come life everlasting." Eternal life! This promise does not occasion surprise. But the other promise is remarkable! Mark it well! Those disciples who have left all in order wholly to follow Him shall be rewarded even here on earth. And how shall they be rewarded? "They shall receive a hundred times as much now in this time:" freedom, peace, contentment, joy, trust in God, fraternal affection; and also, literally, houses, brethren, sisters, mothers.

Ask the Sisters who have left the world for Christ's sake if they have not truly found a mother in the convent; ask them if

they have not experienced her maternal love, if they have not met with sisterly affection, with heartfelt sympathy in sorrow and in joy.

It is true that they must take human nature with them into the convent; many forms of human weakness are to be found there. But in spite of it all, one heart and one soul reign in the convent. Such is the blessing Christ bestows; such is the happiness of the Religious vocation.

Again, this happiness may be seen in the every day life of a good Religious. By means of obedience and pious exercises each day is sanctified, and all her occupations are consecrated to God. Her first waking thoughts are of the Holy Trinity, to whom she offers up her life, her will, her heart with its inclinations. Wherever she may be, and whatever she may do in the course of the day, she remembers that she is in the house of God and is dedicated to His service. Thus a life of toil becomes a paradise in her eyes, dearer than all the passing pleasures to be found in the mansions of the great.

Her hallowed home and holy occupations bring the Religious every hour into the immediate presence of Him who is the joy of paradise, the delight of the elect. Here she worships, here she offers her sacrifices; from her Saviour, in union with whom she lives, labors, and suffers, she obtains grace, strength, and gladness. She can truly adopt the words of the Psalmist: "So in the sanctuary have I come before thee, to see thy power and thy glory. For better is one day in thy courts, above thousands."

She likewise concludes the labors of the day in the presence of the Lord, and commends her spirit to the Sacred Heart of Jesus before she lies down to rest. And, in thought and desire at least, she ceases not to abide with Him, saying with the prophet: "In the night I have remembered thy name, O Lord."

In order to make yourself acquainted to a certain extent with the happiness of the Religious state, call to mind the ex-

ample of Jesus, the God-Man. He became absolutely poor for our sake; and if the Religious imitates Him and becomes poor for His sake, regarding holy poverty as her greatest riches, will not the promise be fulfilled in her case: "Ye shall receive an hundred times as much now in this life...and life everlasting?"

The life of Jesus Christ was one of more than angelic purity; it was a life of mortification and self-denial. He willed to be born only of a pure virgin, and He loved St. John, the virgin apostle, above all His other disciples. If the Religious, imitating the great love of Our Lord for virginity, treads under foot the pleasures of the world and takes refuge in a convent; if she seeks to follow in the footsteps of the pure Lamb of God and of His immaculate Mother, may she not hope to possess the sweet consolations which are unknown to the children of this world?

Finally, Jesus Christ came into the world not to do His own will, for He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. If the Religious imitates this example also, placing herself for her whole life under obedience to her spiritual Superiors, will she not reap the fruit of such a sacrifice?

Thus we see how great is the happiness of a Religious vocation; and every young girl to whose lot this happiness falls ought to thank God for it. With the exception of a call to enter the Catholic Church, or a call to the priesthood, there is perhaps no greater grace than a Religious vocation.

Aspiration.

*Lord, enlighten me to know Your will,
And strengthen me to do it;
Prepare my heart to meet Your love,
And cling forever to it.*

Two Messages.

A message from the Sacred Heart!

What may its message be?

“My child, My child, give Me thy heart—

My Heart has bled for thee.”

This is the message Jesus sends

To my poor heart to-day,

And eager from His throne He bends

To hear what I shall say.

A message to the Sacred Heart!

Oh! bear it back with speed:

“Come, Jesus, reign within my heart—

Thy Heart is all I need.”

Thus, Lord, I'll pray until I share

That home whose joy Thou art—

*No message, dearest Jesus, **there,***

For heart will speak to heart.

2. The Sacrifices of a Religious Vocation



The *Presentation of Mary in the Temple* is a pleasing and instructive festival for young girls. It was instituted to commemorate the day on which the Blessed Virgin, while still a child, consecrated herself to the service of God in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Virgins imitate the blessed Mother of God when, following the call of God, they enter a cloister or Religious community to dedicate their life to His service. Happy they who are thus called! But you ought not to look merely at the happiness and privileges which such a life brings with it; you must also carefully weigh the sacrifices which it demands. Let us now consider these sacrifices.

No one ought to leave the world and enter a convent with the idea of exchanging an active and arduous life for one of ease and comfort. Any one who should expect nothing but sweet tranquillity and undisturbed comfort would find herself cruelly deceived. Reflect, in the first place, upon the trials of community life. Consider one of the essential conditions of life in a convent, namely, to dwell there with many others and to be dependent upon others. Apart from contact with others, the rules of every Religious house make demands altogether opposed to the idea of sweet solitude and self-indulgence. The beloved and petted *Ego* cannot assert itself within those walls. Nor is it necessary to limit these facts to a particularly severe Order, or a convent where the discipline is remarkably strict; it suffices to consider what is implied in keeping the vows, namely, to possess nothing of one's own and to live under

obedience to a Superior. This will at once make it plain that self will must be absolutely set aside.

Thus the life of a good Religious is a life of constant self-sacrifice. For she renounces the very things which mostly bind frail mortals to this earth of ours. The Saviour Himself spoke in sublime words of these sacrifices, and invited generous souls to forsake all things for His sake. He gave the so-called evangelical counsels, which cannot be carried out except at the cost of great sacrifices.

As is well known, these counsels are: voluntary poverty, perfect virginal chastity, constant obedience to spiritual superiors. And Religious pledge themselves, when they make the vows, conscientiously to carry out these counsels under pain of mortal sin. The vows may be either for life or for a fixed period.

It is certainly no small sacrifice to take the vow of poverty, and faithfully carry it out. Can it be easy for a girl who has been surrounded by comforts, or perhaps even by luxuries, to quit all and renounce for the future the right to possess anything of her own?

Or, when she is in the convent, must she not find it difficult, her whole life long, to ask permission like a little child, in relation to every trifle which is given to her, or which she wishes to procure for herself, to exchange or to give away?

The vow of chastity is a second and a very great sacrifice; it involves the renunciation of married life, perfect purity and chastity for the Saviour's sake. This sacrifice is especially pleasing to Christ. The Saviour came into the world in a state of poverty; he gave up everything, and was cradled in a manger upon straw. One thing alone He did not give up: even in the stable He willed that His eye should rest upon virginal souls; and therefore He had Mary and Joseph at His side, near the manger. And on the eve of Our Lord's Passion, when He was about to leave the world, poor as He had entered it, at the

Last Supper, it was the *virginal* John, the beloved disciple, who was privileged to lean upon the Saviour's bosom. And later, amid the gloom of Calvary, the same disciple was again privileged to stand beside the immaculate Mother at the foot of the cross.

Pure as lilies should all those virgins be who are planted in the chosen garden of God in the Religious state. This life of spotless purity is nothing less than a constant struggle, a ceaseless battle to win an angel's crown whilst dwelling in mortal flesh. But struggling and fighting involve sacrifice and renunciation.

Obedience is the third counsel. What sacrifices this word implies. St. Gregory the Great said: "It is perhaps not a very difficult thing to abandon one's possessions, but difficult indeed it is to forsake one's self." Obedience obliges us to forsake ourselves, since it requires us to give up our own will. For this reason Christ added this counsel to the two others. By it the words of St. Paul are literally verified: "You are not your own."

In obedience also sacrifice is implied. These are often secret sacrifices, hidden from human ken, of which the world knows nothing, which no one praises but which pierce the inmost soul in its most sensitive part. How sublime are these sacrifices, these conquests of Self! How richly will the Father, who seeth in secret, one day repay them!

Obedience requires uninterrupted sacrifices from a Religious; she is never free from its yoke for a single instant. Obedience calls her in the morning and commands her in the evening; obedience orders everything in the house, prescribes the hours of work and the nature of that work, the time for prayer and the form of prayer, the time of recreation and the length of that recreation. Obedience guides and controls her every step, her every movement.

Little enough is the room left for the exercise of self-will. A longing for ease and comfort will certainly not be gratified in a

convent. For by the practice of obedience a ceaseless war is waged against Self, and those will find themselves grievously deceived who imagine that they can shelter and tenderly humor their beloved Self in a convent cell.

Therefore if you, my daughter, think that you are called to the Religious state, examine yourself carefully to discover whether you have strength and courage to make these sacrifices with the help of divine grace. If you have the necessary dispositions, go forward! Take up the mighty weapon of obedience; with it combat the enemies of your salvation. Through disobedience man separated himself from God, his Creator and final end, through obedience he must return to Him. Even should you remain in the world you will still have to walk in the way of obedience. *Perfect* obedience to their Superiors is demanded of Religious; faithful obedience to the commands of God and of holy Church is incumbent on seculars.

All for Thee, O heart of Jesus.

*How sweet it is to feel, dear Lord!
That Thou wilt surely see
Each work, or thought, or act of mine
That may be done for Thee!*

*That when I try with pure intent
To serve, to please, to love Thee,
Thy watchful Heart each effort knows,
Thy blessing rests above me.*

***Nothing** unnoticed, **nothing** lost—
Unlike to man in all things—
Grateful art Thou for all I do,
For great as well as small things.*

*Empty my soul of all desire
Man's idle praise to seek,
Hide me in Thee, for Thou dost know
How frail I am—and weak.*

*Take Thou my **all**, since for so long
Thy providence has sought me,
Make me Thine own, since at such cost
Thy precious blood has bought me.*

3. The Signs of a Religious Vocation



St. Bernard asks: “Is it not the Religious state in which a man lives in a manner more pleasing to God, falls less frequently, rises up more speedily when he has fallen, walks more cautiously, rests more securely, dies more happily, and reaps a richer reward?” Assuredly so it is; peace and happiness are the lot of the true Religious. But he must have a real vocation. This call comes from God; no one can call himself or herself.

Therefore beware of imitating those young girls who, in spite of all their confessors urge to the contrary, obstinately persist in their predetermined opinion that they are called to embrace the Religious state. On this account it is well that you should make yourself acquainted with certain signs which show, more or less plainly, whether any one is, or is not, called to enter the cloister.

The first and most indispensable sign, or test, is a good and pure intention. You ought not to enter the convent with the object of finding there freedom from anxiety as to your means of subsistence in the future, honor and esteem, an easy, comfortable life, a provision for old age; with these and like intentions there could be no real call to enter the cloister. The Religious life must be embraced with the intention of better attaining the final end of man, of loving God more entirely, of serving Him more devotedly, and thus striving more earnestly to secure the eternal happiness of heaven. When this is not the predominant and decisive motive of any one who purposes entering the cloister, it is a case of a mistaken vocation. This pure

intention and this inclination toward the Religious life must be lasting. If this desire to enter the convent has been felt from early childhood, and has grown with increasing years, that is a very satisfactory sign, but not an indispensable one. For this desire not unfrequently makes itself felt only a short time before the choice of a state. Previous to that period a disinclination for the life of a Religious may have been experienced. In any case, if the desire for the life of the cloister is strong and firm, decided and definite, the sign is a most favorable one.

The postulant must further be mentally sound and well; that is to say, it will not do for her to be afflicted with a serious affection of the mind or of the nerves, intellectually very incapable, or inclined to melancholia, and to take morbid view of things. Weak-minded and half-witted people are certainly not made for convent life, since they can contribute nothing to the attainment of its end. Those who are of a melancholy or morbid temperament are equally unfitted for the cloister. The pious exercises and meditations, the latter often of a solemn and serious nature, may have the effect of unhinging the mind of persons who are apt to take too gloomy and severe a view of religious truths. Rejoice in the Lord: Serve the Lord joyfully! This should be the maxim for a Religious. The cloister is not a garden of weeping willows. *Physical* health is also a necessity; for to nuns are assigned difficult and important tasks, such for instance, as teaching, or nursing the sick. Only persons who enjoy good health are equal to these duties. Further, many convents have but slender sources of income, so that their inmates are compelled to work hard in order to contribute to the general support. It is plain that no one whose health is weak would be capable of doing this. If, therefore, a young woman has not received from God the requisite health, this is, according to the ordinary course of His providence, a sign that He has not seen fit to bestow upon her a Religious vocation.

The same argument applies to any hereditary diseases which may exist in the family of a postulant. If, for instance,

her father or mother, or both, are consumptive, or have, perhaps, died of tuberculosis, it is to be feared that she may have inherited a tendency to consumption. Under these circumstances it would be wiser for her not to seek admission to a convent.

A gentle and docile character may also be regarded as a sign of a vocation. If the life within the walls of a convent is to be a happy one, it is a primary condition that all the Sisters should live in mutual affection and concord. They should bear patiently with one another's human imperfections and be ever cheerful, helpful, and considerate. A girl whose temper is hasty and violent, or whose character is self-willed and obstinate, will find it exceedingly difficult, and well-nigh impossible, to practice the obedience and patience demanded in the cloister, unless she has a firm, determined will to overcome herself, and has already given abundant proof that she possesses the strength required to do so. Individuals whose passions and evil tendencies are unusually strong, in whose characters sensual affection, inordinate desire for pleasure, and so on, form predominant features, should pause before attempting to enter a cloister. They should wait until they have succeeded, to some extent at least, in mastering their passions.

The consent of one's parents should be obtained before entering upon the Religious state. This duty is imposed by the honor, obedience, and love which children owe their parents. It is true that some of the saints, as St. Teresa for instance, sought and found admission to an Order without the knowledge of their parents and in spite of their prohibition. But these are examples of an extraordinary guidance of Providence, and cannot, generally speaking, be imitated. In ordinary cases so important a step in life should be taken only when it is accompanied by the blessing which rests upon filial obedience. This rule is, however, of universal application if a child has special duties in regard to her parents—if, for example, she is their sole available help and support in their sick-

ness or old age. Under such circumstances she may consider it decided that she is not to go into Religion, however other things may seem to point that way. In any case, however, seek the advice and direction of your spiritual director or confessor.

Before entering any special Order or convent it is necessary to become acquainted with the fundamental principles of that Order or convent, and to possess a decided preference, predilection, and capacity for the kind of work it undertakes to accomplish. Every Order has, besides the general aim of the Religious life, its own special purpose and work; in one, it is teaching; in another, nursing the sick, and so on. Hence it may be clearly seen that all those who have a vocation to enter Religion are not equally suited for every Order.

One word in conclusion. Christian maiden, you may perhaps feel that you have long been powerfully attracted to the Religious life, although serious impediments prevent you from following out your inclination. In this case place your trust in the all-wise providence of God in a spirit of childlike confidence. Love God. Trust Him. He will lead you in the right way. Pray for light and strength that you may always do God's holy will.

The Road of Life.

*What is time? It has been given
That we may work and merit heaven.
Though **rough** may be the path through life,
Darkened by sorrow and beset with strife,
Think of **Him** who at the distant goal
Awaits to crown the faithful soul.*

3. *The Signs of a Religious Vocation*

*Was **His** path brighter than may be
The one His love reserves for thee!
Had **He** not darker ways to tread
Than those from which we shrink in dread!
Fight the good fight, **on, onward** still,
O'er mountain pass and lonesome hill;
Let no sorrow your progress stay,
While **He**, the Saviour, leads the way.
Some future hour will heaven unfold
To thee its gates of burnished gold;
How small will then life's trials be,
Viewed in the bliss of eternity!*



Unmarried Life in the World.

1. The Value of Virginity.



Pou have seen, in my last three instructions, how great is the happiness of those who have a Religious vocation. And you feel that this view of the subject is a correct one. Now let me tell you that one of the chief conditions and one of the greatest sacrifices of the Religious life can be fulfilled and accomplished without quitting the world. And that is indeed done by those girls who remain in the world and yet do not marry, but for the love of God preserve their virginity, and lead a chaste and holy life. In regard to this state some instruction is necessary. First of all, consider the true value of virginity.

The value of virginity is so great and sublime that we, poor earthly-minded mortals, are not able to esteem and honor it as it deserves to be esteemed and honored. In order that you may not think that I overestimate its worth, let us act as do those who possess some costly object, a ring perhaps, or a jewel, the value of which they do not know. What course do such persons pursue? They go to an experienced jeweller and ask for his opinion of their treasure. We will not address ourselves to the children of this world, for they are quite incompetent to give

an opinion upon the subject, but we will ask God, His blessed angels and saints, His Bride the Church—we will, I say, ask them the value of virginity. And what will they reply?

I scarcely know where to begin. Our Lord Himself held virginity in the highest esteem. His whole life on earth bears witness to the fact, as has been already more than once remarked. Let us now contemplate His glorified life. Enter a Catholic church. What do the tabernacle, the altar with its daily sacrifice, the table of communion proclaim? They tell us how dearly Christ loves virginity. For there in the tabernacle, upon the altar, at the table of communion we find that which the prophet foretold: “The corn of the elect, and wine that springeth forth virgins.” It is called the bread of angels, not because angels partake of it, but because Jesus, the Lover of virginal souls, has given it to us that through it men may be transformed into angels—angels in purity.

Now raise your eyes to heaven; look up higher and ever higher still, far above the choirs of blessed spirits. Next to the throne of the Most Holy Trinity you behold Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. In what celestial radiance does her virginal body shine! As the reward for her perfect purity, her Son, by virtue of His omnipotence, did not permit her body to molder in the grave. What rapture fills her maternal heart, on which during her lifetime no shadow of impurity ever rested! With what gladsome acclaim did the angels receive her when they saw the reward of her chastity, the honor paid to virginity in a mortal form. How joyously they greet her now with the words: “Thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee!”

St. Augustine and St. Bernard teach us the value virginity possesses in the eyes of the heavenly spirits. “The angels,” they tell us, “prize virginal purity so highly that they would, if this were possible, envy men because of its glory and splendor.” Virginity causes men to become like to angels—pure beings, supremely beloved of God.

1. The Value of Virginity.

Let us now inquire of the saints as to the value of virginity. From the almost countless utterances of the Fathers on this subject I will select but one; the enthusiastic words are those of St. Athanasius: "Continency is an exalted virtue, chastity is grand and noble, virginity is praiseworthy above measure. How priceless a treasure is virginity! It renders the soul fit to be the temple of God, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost. How beauteous is virginity! It is an unfading crown, a precious pearl, hidden from the majority of mankind, known but by few. Continency, virtue beloved of God, held in high esteem by the saints! By mankind in general thou art little known and still less appreciated, but for all that more clearly understood, more dearly cherished by those who are worthy of thee. Death and hell have no power to molest thee, for immortality followeth in thy train.

"O Continency! delight of the prophets, glory of the apostles! Virginity! the life of angels, the brightest ornament of the saints! Happy is he who possesses this treasure; happy he who patiently, steadfastly refuses to be separated from it, for when life's brief conflict is over he will receive a rich reward. Happy he who has learned renunciation in this life; his dwelling will be in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in the company of angels, prophets, and saints he will enter jubilant upon eternal rest."

Let us in conclusion inquire of holy Church, which St. Paul thus describes: "A glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish." As the virginal Bride of Christ she never for one moment forgets the priceless lily which the heavenly Bridegroom planted in her garden and entrusted to her care. In the words of St. Paul she preaches to all who will hear and understand: "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel. Both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well: and he that giveth her not, doth better."

The Church acts in accordance with this teaching. When in

the sixteenth century the so-called reformation hurled its venomous shafts against holy virginity, when apostate priests and nuns impiously broke their most sacred vows, she lifted up her voice with holy zeal on behalf of the precious legacy bequeathed to her by Christ. The Council of Trent declared solemnly and publicly: "If any man shall say that the married state is higher than that of virginity, and that it is not a better and more blessed thing to remain a virgin than to bind oneself by marriage, let him be *anathema*."

Thus great and exalted is the value of virginity. Chaste virgins are indeed heroines more glorious and worthy of higher praise than those we read of in history. For the former gain not the freedom merely of a country or a city, but of their own heart; and they gain it by a successful warfare against the most formidable of enemies.

*If in obedience to thy Lord,
Thou choose unmarried to remain,
By purity in heart and word,
Seek thou His favor to retain.*

2. The So-called “Old Maids.”



The state of virginity is spoken of by the saints in terms of the most exalted praise. To those expressions I have already quoted in the foregoing instruction I will add one or two more. “What more pleasing,” exclaims St. Chrysostom, “what more glorious than the state of virginity? It surpasses the married state in excellence as much as the heavens do the earth, as angels surpass men.” And St. Thomas of Aquin remarks: “It is a privilege to be an angel, a merit to remain a virgin.” I have yet to say a few words about virginity as it may be preserved by those living in the world.

A young girl may feel herself called neither to marry nor to become a Religious, but she may determine quite voluntarily to preserve her virginity while living in the world. In accordance with this resolution she may reject all offers of marriage, even the most advantageous. This case, however, is exceptional. To those for whom virginity has an attraction the all-wise Creator gives, as a rule, a desire for the Religious life, because it is in the cloister that virginity can be most easily and most surely preserved. Women who live in the world in a state of celibacy are, as a rule, those who, for some reason or other, have been prevented from either marrying or entering the cloister.

How often it happens that young girls are prevented from going into Religion! Many a one has longed from her childhood for the life of the cloister, has passed her youth in piety and innocence, has made every effort to attain the object of her desire, knocking at the door of one convent after another, but

everywhere meeting with a refusal.

Either she was found to have some mental or physical infirmity which made her unfit for the cloister; or she had duties to perform toward aged and infirm parents, or younger brothers and sisters, who were dependent upon her for support, or perhaps her character was unsuited for convent life, and so on.

It is no small trial for her, and many a secret tear does she shed because God has seen fit to refuse her the object of her ardent desires. Ought she on this account to be disconsolate? Certainly not; for God orders all things for the best. But why did He implant a longing for the cloister in her heart if this longing was never to be satisfied? It is plain that He acts thus in order to increase her merits. To find herself obliged to relinquish all hope of attaining the desired goal is the greatest and most painful of sacrifices. If she makes this sacrifice for the love of God, resigning herself to His will in a spirit of child-like submission, and striving to serve Him faithfully in the world, how great is the store of merit she lays up for herself in eternity!

And maidens like these, to whom the Religious habit was denied, seldom fail to find in the stormy ocean of the world some quiet islet which they may sow and plant, making it as a garden of the Lord, and devoting their life to Him as surely as they could have done in a convent.

A third class consists of those who had felt inclined to the marriage state. They would gladly have married, but have been compelled, by force of circumstances, to relinquish the idea. These young women are condemned, as people say, "to single blessedness," and to become "old maids." Such persons should all make a virtue of necessity, and in a Christian spirit recognize the hand of God in the arrangement of the circumstances of their life, submitting patiently to His most holy will. Divine providence seems to have ordained that a large number of girls should remain unmarried. Statistics prove that in all nations

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the number of women considerably exceeds that of men; and of the latter there are many, for instance priests and Religious, who cannot marry and have a family.

Under all circumstances a Christian maiden ought to remain firmly convinced that it is no disgrace to remain unmarried, or to be what is commonly called an "old maid." Rather is it an honor and a happiness for her if she is a maid, a virgin, in the true sense of the word, and is recognized as such by the all-seeing eye of God. And indeed an unmarried woman, a true virgin like this deserves to be held in high esteem, even, and indeed particularly, when her hair has grown gray and her youthful beauty has fled. She has cheerfully renounced that which most persons regard as a great happiness, in order to choose a better part; she courageously treads the path of life alone, a path which so many do not venture to tread without the support and protection of a husband.

It truly requires courage and fortitude to pass through life in such a manner; but the Giver of all good gifts will not deny these qualities to His true servants if they keep eyes and heart fixed upon Him. Mothers and wives do much for the world, and obtain for themselves no little store of merit, by faithfully fulfilling their duties, by bringing up children to be pious and useful members of society. But many so-called "old maids" have done quite as much or even more by their advice, their help, their prayers—in a word, their benefactions.

I happened to hear the following account of just such a good and admirable "old maid": She was not beautiful, it is true, but she possessed the far more valuable gifts of a bright intelligence and an inexhaustible fund of sweetness and kindness of heart. Her mother died at a comparatively early age, and she had to undertake the task of bringing up a numerous family of younger brothers and sisters. In the course of time her eldest brother married a wife who knew very little about housekeeping. Once more the aunt came to the rescue, and in-

structed her sister-in-law in household matters, doing this with so much prudence and tact that her presence was never felt to be an intrusion. At a subsequent period the family of a married sister became involved in financial difficulties. Again the aunt made herself very useful; she went to live in her sister's house, paid a large sum for her board, and took charge of the children. After the death of both her brother and his wife she returned to their children, aiding them in every possible way by her wise counsel and more practical assistance. Thus this "old maid" did as much good in *three* different families as she would have been able to effect in *one* had she married.

Leave your future serenely and hopefully in the hands of God, to be disposed of as He shall see fit, and if you are to live unmarried in the world and be called an "old maid" you may say:

*Why should I blush to hear that name,
As if a soubriquet of shame?
For know, an old maid though I be,
Some dames would fain change states with me.*

Strive to become perfect in the following of Christ.

Ask Jesus Himself to teach you the lessons of perfection.

Jesus, Master, Teach Me.

*Teach me, teach me, dearest Jesus,
In Thine own sweet, loving way,
All the lessons of perfection
I must practice day by day.*

*Teach me **Meekness**, dearest Jesus,
Of Thine own the counterpart:
Not in words and actions only,
But the meekness of the heart.*

*Teach **Humility**, sweet Jesus,
To this poor, proud heart of mine
Which yet wishes, O my Jesus,
To be modelled after Thine.*

*Teach me **Fervor**, dearest Jesus,
To comply with every grace,
So as never to look backward,
Never slacken in the race.*

*Teach me **Poverty**, sweet Jesus,
That my heart may never cling
To whate'er its love might sever
From my Saviour, Spouse, and King.*

*Teach me **Chastity**, dear Jesus,
That my every day may see
Something added to the likeness
That my soul should bear to Thee.*

*Teach **Obedience**, dearest Jesus,
Such as was Thy daily food
In Thy toilsome earthly journey
From the cradle to the rood.*

*Teach **Thy Heart**, to me, dear Jesus,
Is my fervent, final prayer,
For all beauties and perfections
Are in full perfection there.*

Family Life



Religion the Foundation of Family Life.

1. The Happiness of Family Life.



The sphere of woman's activity, especially in the class for which I write, is preeminently the home. The object to be kept in view in a girl's education, whether she be brought up at home or in the boarding-school, is to fit her for domestic life, to give her a love of domesticity, founded on the fear of God. This you, my daughter, must seek to acquire; in order that later on, in whatever position you may find yourself, whether you live with your parents, take a situation as housekeeper, or preside over a household of your own, you may for love of God lead a life of self-sacrificing devotion, unseen and unnoticed, working to promote the welfare of the family, the maintenance of religion and good principles. Let us consider the conditions requisite for happiness in the family. Beginning at the foundation, I wish to show in the first place that the happiness of family life is based upon religion.

A young wife who was passionately fond of reading novels said to her husband: "How tiresome it is that novels always come to a conclusion when once people are married." "My dear child," the husband replied, "that cannot be otherwise, for

if the story were carried on further it would be one of disenchantment." That is true in many cases! How many young persons find themselves bitterly disappointed very soon after their marriage! Wherefore is this the case? Why do they see their brightest hopes vanish like a mirage in the desert? It is because so many newly married couples do not build their hopes of happiness on the firm basis of religion and piety.

Foolish indeed it is to say, as too many do: "One can do very well without religion." Is this true? Can one do without religion? One can accumulate money and property, indulge in sensual pleasures, and lead a riotous, dissipated life. But without religion no one can enjoy that sweet heavenly peace of which the children of this world are wholly ignorant, and that joy which is abiding even amidst sorrows and trials.

Yes; a true religious spirit must prevail. One often hears persons say: "Certainly, religion is necessary, but it is quite possible to be religious without believing everything taught from the pulpit, or being so pious or so scrupulous in matters of religion." As a rule such persons look for a cloak to hide their laxity or lukewarmness. Religion and morals, faith and practice are not to be separated. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by language such as theirs. Fathers and mothers may indeed parade their civic righteousness and virtue before the world, but unless their conduct is inspired by faith and true piety as the guide of their life, their family happiness lacks a firm footing, a sure foundation. Only too many examples of this are to be met with in daily life. Families in which no time is found for prayer, for obligatory attendance at church, for the instruction of the children; where only temporal affairs and material prosperity are considered to be of importance, where gold is eagerly sought after, and higher interests are ignored; in such families true happiness cannot be found, though riches may abound, with a superfluity of all good things; even though the palatial mansion is furnished in the most luxurious style, and its inmates are clothed in silk and satin and adorned with

glittering gems and precious jewels.

There is another important point to be remarked. Even the happiest family life is and must ever be a life of sacrifice. It is difficult to realize that this is the case when one sees how young people marry nowadays, imagining themselves to be entering an earthly paradise where their days will be spent in pleasure and enjoyment, and their path will be between hedges of roses, roses without thorns! How different is the reality found to be, with its cares and crosses, labors and sorrows! What a spirit of self-sacrifice must the various members of a family possess if peace and happiness are not to be altogether lost! Religion alone is able to impart to them this spirit of unselfishness, of self-renunciation and sacrifice. It alone will enable them to persevere in that spirit until death. Hence we see that in this case also the peace and happiness of every family must be built upon the foundation of religion.

And in yet another case this is true. If family happiness is to be complete it is essential that the children should be well reared; without religion this is impossible. The infidel father who entrusted the education of his children to Religious, because it was, as he said, a perfect hell to believe in nothing, confirmed this truth in a striking manner. An unbeliever pronounced unbelief to be a hell upon earth. This saying proclaims with a loud voice that the education of youth is a very serious thing. In regard to this subject St. John Chrysostom thus expresses himself: "What grander task can any one have than that of guiding souls, of training the young? I esteem him who understands how to mold and educate youth more highly than the painter, the sculptor, and every other artist, whoever he may be."

But where, in what family, do we find that true and wise system of education which is so important a factor in family happiness? There only where the spirit of religion and piety pervades the house, rendering it a temple in which God dwells.

Only parents who possess this spirit of faith can train their children in Christian obedience, and inspire them with a horror of vice. They alone will seek assistance from God and remind their children of His presence who regard Him as the real Master of their house, and who model all their thoughts and actions, their words and works, according to the commands of His holy religion.

Now, my dear child, thank God from the bottom of your heart if He has given you parents such as these; parents who lay the greatest stress upon faith, upon religion and piety, and make every effort to bring you up or cause you to be brought up in the right way. No greater benefit could possibly be bestowed upon you! Parents who act thus lay the foundation of happiness for their family both in time and in eternity; they bear in mind the truth of these lines:

*If on Faith's firm basis founded,
By the fear of God surrounded,
Fast as a rock thy house shall stand,
Dreading no storm or hostile hand.*

2. The Safeguard of Family Life.



In the Catholic Church, in the Catholic religion, the family finds its firm support, its sure safeguard and shield. For this Church alone fearlessly preaches at all times and in all places that in which consists the sole safeguard and support of the family, namely, the sacredness of the family, the indissolubility of marriage, the sanctity of matrimony as an institution ordained by God, as a religious contract, and a holy sacrament.

The family, or matrimony, is an institution ordained by God. Human beings, like plants and the lower animals, are, according to the all-wise designs of God, intended to propagate themselves until the end of time. But man is an incomparably higher being than a plant or an animal; he is endowed with reason, free will, and immortality. God has consequently placed the manner in which the human race is to be continued on a high level. He created woman especially, and gave her to the first man as a helper, uniting the two in the closest companionship. Thus did He call the first family into existence and hallow the continuation of the human race. And thus it devolves upon human beings to educate their off spring and to perpetuate family life. In the animal world no such thing exists; there is to be found no family life, properly so called, and no education. For the family as ordained by God is the nursery of Christendom which fills the earth with true believers, one day to complete the number of the elect in heaven. Thus the family stands like a tree in the garden of God, its fruits being good children. Impress firmly upon your mind the truth that the family is no mere human invention, but an institution or-

dained by God. The Church has always pronounced marriage “a holy state, appointed by God,” thus emphatically refuting the false teaching of certain heretics who regarded marriage as an evil thing.

In the second place the safeguard of the family consists in understanding marriage as a *religious contract*. Marriage is a *contract* because it, like every other contract, is based upon the agreement and consent of two contracting parties.

It is, however, a *religious* contract, essentially distinct from every merely civil contract. The marriage contract is *indissoluble* according to divine law—moreover, the marriage contract imparts special, supernatural graces, which no other contract does. This contract is concluded before a minister of the Church, who imparts a special blessing at the nuptial Mass.

The Christian family maintains its exalted position owing to the fact that marriage is regarded as a sacred institution, as a *holy sacrament*. We know marriage to be a sacrament, because the infallible Church teaches us that it is such, and commands us to believe this as a divinely revealed doctrine. And the following proofs may be adduced in support of this doctrine.

St. Paul expressly terms the union of a man and a woman in the marriage state a sacrament, when he says: “This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church.” Marriage as a sacrament is like to the mystic union which exists between Christ and the Church. As the union of Christ with the Church is a sacred bond so is marriage between Christians.

Tradition shows us that the Catholic Church has always regarded marriage as a sacrament. The Fathers teach us that Christ was present at the marriage in Cana to show that He raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. St. Augustine says: “The superiority of marriage among Christians consists in the sanctity of the sacrament.”

And it is easy to perceive from a purely natural point of view how useful and appropriate, nay more, how necessary it was that Jesus Christ should elevate marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. Marriage is of the greatest importance for the whole human race. This state of life has very many weighty and permanent duties and burdens. On this account married people need special graces, and they receive them through Christ's raising marriage to the dignity of a sacrament.

Thus we see that the safeguard and shield of the Christian family consist in regarding marriage as an institution ordained by God, as a religious contract, a holy sacrament. The Christian religion, the Catholic Church, is the only sure foundation for this security and protection. The profanation and desecration of marriage, divorce, the disintegration of family life, and the moral deterioration of society, are the evils of the present day. Therefore, my dear child, be ever on your guard against careless, worldly views of family life.

To The Holy Family.

*Jesus, whose almighty bidding
All created things fulfil,
Lived on earth in meek subjection
To His earthly parents' will.
Sweetest Infant, make us patient
And obedient for Thy sake;
Teach us to be chaste and gentle,
All our stormy passions break.*

*Blessed Mary! thou wert chosen
To be Mother of thy Lord:
Thou didst guide the early footsteps
Of the great Incarnate Word.
Dearest Mother! make us humble;
For thy Son will take His rest
In the poor and lowly dwelling
Of a humble sinner's breast.*

*Joseph! thou wert called the father
Of thy Maker and thy Lord;
Thine it was to save thy Saviour
From the cruel Herod's sword.
Suffer us to call thee father;
Show to us a father's love;
Lead us safe through every danger
Till we meet in heaven above.*

3. The Peace of Family Life.



“**W**here there is faith, there is charity; where there is charity, there is peace.” This saying applies in the first place to a family in which the true religious spirit and genuine piety prevail.

*Peace gives the young their joyous smile,
Peace lightens manhood's daily toil;
Peace gives the old man longed-for rest,
Peace, the happiness of the blest!*

Peace! How our heart rejoices at the sound of this word! Peace especially is the characteristic of our holy religion. Not without reason did the angels sing when Jesus was born in Bethlehem: “On earth peace, to men of good will.” Can peace be wanting where Jesus dwells? And Jesus dwells where faith prevails. Let us consider this peace as it is to be found in the Christian family.

Let us begin by contemplating the bright pattern of every family presented by the holy family in the cottage at Nazareth. What deep and abiding peace is here! Whence does it spring? The holy family is poor, forsaken, despised by men. No earthly goods are there; no riches, spacious apartments, costly garments, delicate viands, nothing, in fact, which in the eyes of worldlings belongs to content and happiness. Yet Mary and

Joseph with the holy Child enjoyed contentment and happiness as great as that of our first parents before the fall. The reason of this was that they had peace of heart.

This peace may be enjoyed where there is a lack of all the external gifts of fortune; it is frequently all the greater in proportion to the scantier measure in which these good things are possessed. An Eastern legend runs as follows: "A Persian monarch was once upon a time sick unto death; the magicians declared that in order to recover he must wear the shirt belonging to the only happy man in his whole realm. Messengers were dispatched to search everywhere for this fortunate individual—in the capital, in the provinces, in town and in country—but nowhere could he be found. At last one of those who had been sent forth came upon a shepherd who, in a lonely mountain valley, was lying on the grass, playing upon his pipe. The messenger entered into conversation with him, and gathered from what he said that he was indeed truly happy; but a shirt could not be obtained from this one perfectly happy man. He was too poor to own one. And so the Persian monarch died." The meaning of this anecdote is simple enough. An individual or a family may be happy and at peace without any of the gifts of fortune, if they but understand how to be so. And it will be clear to them if they ponder the words of St. Paul: "For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." In order, however, constantly to enjoy this peace of mind, the members of a family must firmly establish and maintain in their home the conditions of this peace. These conditions are threefold: faith in the merciful providence of God, peace with God, and a hope of heaven.

As Christians we believe in the goodness of God, whose overruling providence disposes all things as is best for us, with infinite wisdom and love. This belief procures for Christian parents and children, whatever be their burdens and sorrows, the consoling assurance that God has laid these trials upon

3. The Peace of Family Life.

them with some merciful design, and that a time will come when they will thank Him for them all. This consciousness it is which prevents peace from ever entirely forsaking them. If their desires remain unfulfilled, if they have much to suffer, they suffer in a spirit of resignation, they do not lack consolation; peace still dwells in their hearts.

The second condition of family peace is peace with God. As Christians we know God to be our holy Lawgiver and just Judge. We believe in the immortality of the soul, in heaven and hell. And as reasonable beings we know that death and judgment and the irrevocable decision as to our eternal happiness or misery may come upon us at any moment.

If Christian parents and children maintain a constant watchfulness over the state of their conscience; if they carefully avoid sin; if as soon as they become conscious of having committed any serious sin they hasten to wash it away by means of the Sacrament of Penance—they may repose in the blissful conviction that they are children of God. For them God is a loving Father, for them death has no terrors. It is only the gloomy portal through which they must pass in order to enter heaven. Herein lies the fulness of peace for the pious, conscientious Christian—peace with God, peace in his own soul, peace in his family.

The third condition is a hope of heaven. When all the members of a family are animated by this hope, peace dwells within the home. This hope ought to be as firm and steadfast as was that of a young girl the closing scenes of whose life I witnessed some years ago. She was one of my parishioners and in the bloom of youth, for she was only twenty, when she was called to depart this life. She had been an intelligent child, a modest maiden, an obedient daughter, beloved by her parents, brothers, and sisters. Her heart had been closed to the allurements of the world, and given to God. Death was now close at hand; her relatives stood weeping around her bed; she alone was

calm and even joyous. With an expression of heartfelt piety she gazed at the crucifix which she held in her hand, exclaiming: "Help me, O my Saviour, receive me in heaven!" These were her last words. She sank back upon her pillows, and expired in the peace of the Lord.

What was it which imparted such sweet peace to the heart of this young girl at the very moment which is regarded as the most dreadful and terrifying? What but the hope that she was about to enter into the everlasting peace of heaven! If this hope is firmly rooted in the hearts of parents and children they keep the thought of heaven constantly before their minds, and however severe may be the trials which come upon them, they never lose their peace of soul. They know that the bitterest sorrows are but transient, while the joys of heaven last forever.

Whilst you are still in the bright season of youth see that you seek to possess the conditions of true peace. Impress deeply upon your heart a belief in divine providence. Endeavor to be at peace with God by avoiding sin. Constantly maintain and cherish within your soul the blissful hope of heaven. Then, whatever may be the circumstances in which you find yourself placed, however heavy the trials which overtake you, the misfortunes which fall to your lot, your peace of mind will be unshaken.



The Religious Education of Children.

1. Happiness or Misery.



*How sacred is a little child,
Simple as yet and undefiled;
His angel, we are told, stands nigh
To the bright throne of God on high.*

In every Christian family the greatest weight must be attached to the bringing up of the children in conjunction with the practice of religion. In relation to this matter it behooves parents to bear in mind the Saviour's exhortation: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice." Parents ought not to have merely worldly aims in regard to the education of their children; they ought not only to seek to have a large fortune to leave them, or to enable them at a later period to acquire much wealth; it is their duty to take care, first of all, that their children are religiously brought up.

In the generality of cases the whole subsequent life depends

upon the early training received—the happiness or misery of both parents and children. The words of Our Lord are worthy of attention: “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Grapes are to be found only on vines, and figs on fig trees. In like manner one may ask: Would you look for good children with bad parents? Of course not. If you want to know whether certain children are receiving a good Christian education you have only to inquire whether the parents are good and pious.

If children see and hear only what is good, are allowed to do only what is right, and are held back with a firm hand from all that is evil, they will, as a rule, grow up good Christians. If, on the contrary, a child sees and hears scarcely anything which is not of an objectionable nature, its evil tendencies will grow stronger day by day, and we cannot wonder if it becomes both vicious and miserable.

The mother of St. Clement of Ancyra earnestly desired that her son might be a martyr. She gave him a pious, Christian education; he became a saint and eventually received the martyr’s palm.

St. Blanche desired that her son might become a holy king. She imparted to him an education corresponding to her wish, and she became the mother of St. Louis, king of France. We will quote an illustration of an opposite character. There was once a godless queen of Bohemia who brought up her son Boleslaus to be as wicked as herself; he committed the crime of fratricide, and persecuted the Christians. If we wish for further examples of what has been said we have only to look at families where the task of education is undertaken by unprincipled parents, or, more probably, neglected altogether. The character of children usually corresponds to that of their parents, as the proverb expresses it: “The apple does not fall far from the tree.”

If, on the contrary, I ask you how it is that you are walking

in the right way, gladly and gratefully will you answer that it is because you had good parents, who both by precept and example strove to lead you to do what is right. If we raise our eyes to heaven and ask its blessed inhabitants how they came to enjoy their present felicity, they will reply: "We had pious Christian parents." If we ask the wretched dwellers in hell how it is that they are plunged in endless misery, they will for the most part lay the blame on their education, and exclaim: "We had parents who neglected their duty and who, by their bad example, confirmed us in what is evil. Cursed be they forevermore! Our eternal misery lies at their door!"

Therefore do truly good and pious parents "seek first the kingdom of God" in regard to the education of their children, that is, they seek to provide for their eternal happiness before everything else. When their eyes rest upon their beloved offspring they say to themselves over and over again: "Shall even one of these dear children sink into hell through our fault? No, a thousand times no!" And then they apply themselves with renewed earnestness and increased zeal to the important work of education.

But upon education depends the happiness or misery, not of the children alone, but of their parents also. Many and manifold are the cares and anxieties, the labors and sorrows which fall to the lot of fathers and mothers of families. Surely they ought to have some pleasures, some compensations. Who can supply them with these pleasures and afford them these compensations if not their children? And it is certain that they will do this if they have been properly reared; they will be credit to their parents wherever they may go. And when such children stand beside the death-bed of their father or mother, the gaze of these latter will rest upon them with confidence and satisfaction, and in their heart, if not with their lips, they will say: "I have no reason to be ashamed of my sons and daughters. They will not forget me; they will pray for me; they will sanctify themselves, and one day they will follow me to heaven."

That is the joy and reward of parents who have been careful to educate their children aright.

These serious thoughts and considerations will give you some idea how sublime a task is Christian education. They will urge you to do your very utmost to lighten the difficult task your parents have to perform, and to take upon yourself some portion at least of their heavy responsibility. You can and ought to do this by showing at all times and in all places how well and carefully you have been brought up; by proving yourself to be the joy and the glory of your parents. What happiness will be yours if, when their last hour shall come, they take leave of you with an expression of love and benediction.

2. Begin the Work Early.



*A child!—What mystery in this word!—
A child was once our blessed Lord,
Assuming our mortality,
That thus God's children we might be.*

In what does this mystery consist? In the inestimable value which the soul of a child possesses in the sight of God and of all good people. The mother of whom the following incident is related placed the right estimate on the value of a child. She had nine children, but was so poor that it was with the utmost difficulty she could contrive to feed and clothe them. One day a wealthy and charitable lady offered to adopt one of the nine little ones and give it a thoroughly good education. But the worthy woman refused to part with her child. "If you were to give me your whole fortune," she said, "I would not let you take one of my children from me; for that which is enough for eight will doubtless be enough for nine." She would not entrust the training of her child to the best woman in the world.

Considering the great value of a child in the sight of God, it follows that its education must be of the utmost importance, especially its *early* education. Every gardener who knows anything about his business is aware how much depends upon the care bestowed upon young and tender plants. If they are neglected in the early stages of their growth they soon become

sickly or wither away altogether. All who labor in the garden of the Lord, all those I mean whose duty it is to educate youth, ought to lay this to heart, for education cannot begin too early.

In regard to this subject I have often heard parents say: "But what can your Reverence be thinking about! To say that a child's education ought to begin in the cradle! How can you expect a little creature like that to understand anything?" If I had uttered the retort which rose to my lips I should have replied: "You good people have not much more sense yourselves!"

The mental and, more especially, the religious education of the child should be commenced as soon as possible, and should keep pace with its physical development. For if one wishes to get the upper hand in a garden and to keep the beds tidy, it is necessary to extirpate the germs of the weeds. And if a building is to be solid and lasting it must have a firm foundation.

Every child possesses qualities and capacities which slumber within its breast. It is easy to develop them within the tender mind; the soil is soft and receptive to all which may be planted there. The heart of a child resembles a garden, which must be properly tilled if it is to produce fruit. A garden left to itself will be overrun with weeds, and all hope of a yield must perforce be abandoned.

Parents are often heard to complain of the naughtiness and perversity of their children. As a rule we may tell such parents that they have only themselves to blame; for if they had attended to the education of their children while there was yet time, if they had cultivated the field of their heart at an early period, they would be reaping joy and consolation instead of sorrow and distress. Man must be trained from his earliest childhood to shun all that is evil and sinful.

It is the roots which keep the tender plants in the ground and supply them with sap and nourishment. The roots of the

Christian life are religion and piety. These roots must be tended, and that very early; else the outlook in the field of education will be but a poor one. Priests and teachers experience the truth of this fact only too frequently. One meets with boys and girls six or seven years old who have as yet merely vegetated, growing up like little animals. About their Father in heaven, about Jesus, Mary, and their guardian angel they know nothing at all, or at best but very little. They can scarcely tell how to make the sign of the cross. The roots of religion and piety have been so neglected that they are buried deep down in the youthful hearts, or what is worse, choked by the weeds of bad habits, of idleness, greediness, lying, dissimulation, and obstinacy.

But it is a consolation to know that children who have been well and carefully trained up to their sixth and seventh year remain, as a rule, what they are at that period. It gives real pleasure to teachers when the children of truly pious parents come to their school. In the favorable atmosphere of the family circle, the spiritual life of the child, drawing its vitality from the warm heart of the mother, has been developed, religion and piety have grown and flourished. All that the child hears when he goes to school about God and about heaven, about piety and prayer, about innocence and obedience, and every virtue is not new to him. On the contrary, those virtues are dear and familiar truths. Out of the eyes of the child who has been brought up thus a new soul seems to look. The pious mother, the best of gardeners, has tilled the soil of the child's heart, so that the tender roots of good principles, of religion and piety might strike deep and not be choked by the weeds of evil habits.

It often happens that girls of your age have to occupy themselves, in one way or another, with the education of younger children. Elder brothers and sisters possess great influence over the younger ones. This influence is generally much greater than that which the parents are able to exercise. On this account, good and wise parents are extremely careful as to

2. Begin the Work Early.

the training of their first child; for the eldest thus becomes no little help to them in training the others.

If you have younger brothers and sisters, or if you are placed over children in some family, be extremely careful to set the children a good example. Show them all possible patience and affection, and if you win their hearts in this way, make use of your influence to inspire them with a love of God and of virtue. What a sphere of usefulness is open to you here, and how easily you can gain the love of Him who has said: "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me."

3. The Principal Factors and Supports in the Training of a Child.



*Listen, O child, thou needs must early learn
In this world good from evil to discern;
Or else the useful herb thou wilt pass by
And pluck the poisonous flower that charms the eye.*

The earliest training has this in view: to teach the child to distinguish between good and evil, between what is useful and what is poisonous, and to take delight only in the former.

In order that this task may be profitably accomplished various means are necessary. In a nursery ground the young, growing plants are fastened at an early period to stakes or supports to make them grow upright and straight; so in the training of children certain strong supports are required.

What is primarily and essentially necessary in education for the child's support is the good example of the teacher. Vain will be his words, useless his lamentations, fruitless his exhortations, if, instead of edifying his pupils by his good example, he rather gives them scandal. Children soon imitate what they see their parents do. Only too often do we experience the truth of the saying which tells us that as is the father, so is the son; as is the mother, so is the daughter. Let us take the case of parents who do not say their prayers regularly every morning

and evening, or who do not say grace at meals. Children may be taught at school that they ought to say their prayers, but if they see that their parents neglect to pray they will follow this bad example.

The following incident, which was related to me, forcibly shows how great is the effect of bad example: A lady overheard a little boy about five or six years old using very bad language whilst playing in the street with other children. She stopped, and reproved him severely, threatening to complain of him to his parents. "I don't care if you do," was the unexpected rejoinder. "Father and mother curse worse than I do!" It is most deplorable that such parents should exist.

On the contrary we often find to our consolation that poor but thoroughly Christian fathers and mothers, in cities and in the country, have given their children an excellent training. The secret lies in the power of example. The children of parents who themselves practice all that religion requires of them are certain to turn out well.

The second essential in home-training consists in accustoming children to obedience from the outset. A little boy was asked: "Tell me, my child, do you obey your mother or does she obey you?" "I obey her when she is angry," he replied pertly, "but when she is not angry, she obeys me!" It was very plain that he had never been taught to obey.

Yet it is quite possible to accustom even little children to obey. This is proved by the fact that irrational animals can be trained to a certain kind of obedience. Why, for instance, do not dogs and cats jump upon the dinner table when dishes containing food are placed upon it, as their natural instincts would prompt them to do? Simply because they have learned to obey.

But there are teachers and mothers who in their foolish fondness themselves obey a child. The little creature has only to scream, and they hasten to do whatever the young gentle-

man wishes! If a child is not taught to obey from infancy, the lesson of obedience will prove very hard to implant later on and never perhaps be thoroughly grounded.

Just as it is often necessary when tying up young trees to use a certain amount of force to straighten what is crooked, so strictness is required in accustoming children to obedience; they must be reprov'd, and punished also. For the words of Scripture cannot but be true: "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son." It is clear that this saying holds good in the present day; it can never be antiquated, even in the twentieth-century progress and vaunted humanity. It is absolutely necessary to be strict with children at certain times, and without losing one's temper.

Another main factor in the education of a child is the school. The training at school has a twofold purpose—one temporal, the other eternal. At school the child ought to be trained to be a good and useful member of society, to do the will of God, and thus to secure the reward of heaven. The supernatural part of this twofold undertaking requires that the school should not merely instruct, but educate also; educate in obedience, in truthfulness, and before all else, in the fear of God, in self-control, in purity of heart. Thus we see that the chief work the Christian school has to perform is to teach the child to be a good Christian, who will on this account be a good citizen as well.

In conclusion I will relate an anecdote from which you may learn that you ought always to listen to the wise exhortations and affectionate admonitions of your parents and teachers, and also endeavor faithfully to carry them out.

A young lady received a letter in which improper proposals were made to her, these being couched in the most alluring and flattering terms. With childlike confidence she showed the letter to her mother, who, after reading it, turned pale, and burst into tears. When the daughter saw this she exclaimed:

“O my darling mother, you need not be in the least anxious about me! Your tears have entirely obliterated all the specious flatteries and fair promises which this letter contains.”

The mother tenderly embraced her daughter, and gave her a diamond ring, the stones of which sparkled as brightly as do dewdrops when the sun shines upon them. Filled with gratitude, the good child said: “Dearest mother, I solemnly promise that if ever improper proposals should again be made to me I will look at these precious stones and say to myself: These are your mother’s tears.” If, my dear daughter, you should ever find your self in similar circumstances, think of Mary, your sweet Mother in heaven.

4. Studies: Higher Education.*



Let us now consider the study, the education which is really suited to a woman who has a house to look after, or who should be brought up and trained with a view to this. In treating the question little or no account will be taken of exceptional cases, for example, of *really* clever girls who intend to devote themselves to teaching, or to literature, or of those who have no home duties or only very light ones. In the curriculum of woman's education the first place should be given to the study of her own language, so that she may speak and write it well, and also acquire a fair knowledge of its literature and of its classical writers. This will be not only a source of improvement and pleasure to herself, but will enable her to criticise authors, to take part in conversation with husband, father, son, or brother who takes an interest in and likes to discuss such topics.

The second place may be given to the study of modern languages, particularly French and German. Young men have not as a rule the time, the opportunities, perhaps the talent, for acquiring this useful branch of education, that girls have. A good knowledge of French will make them a great help, perhaps a necessity, to the other members of their family when traveling, as this delightful and educating recreation has become—owing to the railway and other causes—a matter of course, and is within the reach of all well-to-do people. I would throw in Latin, or some knowledge of it. It is the language of

* Excerpt from “*Woman*,” by the Reverend N. Walsh, S. J.

the Church and of the holy sacrifice, and would help those who may be called to Religion to recite more devoutly the Divine Office, or that of the Blessed Virgin. Madame de Swetchine writes to a woman friend: "Your Latin has given me at least as much pleasure as the rest; the language of our faith should never be omitted in any religious education."

The third place should be given to what are commonly called "accomplishments," and of these first of all to music, because this can be most and best utilized for the pleasure, delight, and enjoyment of home life. It is a mistake, however, to force or to allow a girl to study this or any other accomplishment for which she has neither talent nor taste, perhaps a dislike. To do this would be to lose time which could have been better employed, and would certainly end in failure. Teachers, not parents, are the best and safest persons to find out the accomplishment suited to a girl and in which she is likely to succeed, whether this be music, painting, drawing, tapestry or some other useful or ornamental handwork; for all these contribute in their own way to the happiness, brightness, and external beauty of the home.

We come now to a study of a lower kind. Fénelon recommends the woman of the house "to be well versed in housekeeping." This supposes a system of order, punctuality, everything kept in its place, cleanliness, neatness, and a care of external beauty. It has been said that the cook is the most important person in the house because she can put all the others in good or bad humor. There is some truth in the saying, "God sends the meat and the devil sends the cook." A good cook can make a palatable dish out of poor material, whilst a bad cook will spoil the best. Hence the mistress should study and give attention to this important branch of "housekeeping," that she may be able to place on the table food well-cooked and well-served that she knows will please the family. God supposes all this in His description of the valiant woman, "who hath arisen at night and given a prey to her household, and food to her

maidens.” In the words of an eminent French bishop: “A lady should diligently attend to her household affairs: it is one of her principal duties. She will never degrade herself by condescending to the smallest details, for there is a manner of doing so which compromises neither her dignity, her authority, nor her character. Manual labor of whatever nature, whether the spinning of wool or flax, handling the distaff or needle, superintending the making of dishes or of garments—manual labor, I repeat, is one of the best and most useful resources of woman’s life; and one of the plague-spots of our present age is its being entirely laid aside, or at least rarely practised.”

Fénelon says that the mistress of the house should also be well versed “in keeping accounts,” and God, in His description of the valiant woman, supposes this. Men have, as a rule, the earning of the money, women the spending of it. It is, therefore, one of their duties to keep an account of monies received, of how they were spent, etc., and to keep clear of drifting into debt. It is, however, a not uncommon failing with men to think and unreasonably complain that a wife ought to do more with what is given to her than she really can.

There is no doubt that if the wife and mother is to be as the sun in her own house, she must be unselfish, act often against her natural inclination, be just yet considerate toward others, never neglect a duty through whim or because annoyed or contradicted. She must often when tired and taxed, unfairly perhaps, by others, either keep a *sweet* silence or say the right word in the right way, and conceal as best she can the interior impatience or pain which she cannot help feeling.

The example, the habitual action and ways of such a woman must—not in a moment or at once, but in the end—win the respect and admiration of all around her, and exercise a powerful influence for good in her family. Hence St. Chrysostom writes: “There is nothing more powerful than a religious and prudent woman to calm her husband and to form him to

whatever she wishes." Every-day experience proves the truth of this saying of a great saint who spent his priestly and episcopal life in constant contact with seculars. All know how St. Monica illustrated this truth. She won her great son Augustine to God and His Church by her prayers and tears; but more, she won over a bad husband, who for years treated her harshly, by her sweet and patient command of temper and tongue. What has been said of wife and mother may be said, in some measure, of daughters and sisters, who, when bright and companionable with father and brothers, contribute much to the happiness of home. By way of conclusion to this point, is it too much to say that woman, the sun of the house, should do her best to make it so comfortable, cheerful, and happy that when the husband and sons—the toilers—have done their day's work, they would rather come to her and their own home than go to a queen and her palace?

It may now be asked, may not woman in her intellectual pursuits go further and higher than those subjects already referred to—subjects which are the best for making her the sun in her own house? Certainly, if three conditions be observed:

- (1) that no home duty be neglected or carelessly discharged on account of such study;
- (2) that she is capable of it;
- (3) that she be, as Fénelon puts it, "modest in her studies."

The intellectual cultivation of woman has always been a marked feature of the Catholic Church. "Christianity," writes Ozanam, "had scarcely appeared when already the example of Christ instructing the Samaritan woman was imitated." St. John wrote to Electa, and the Fathers of the Church, SS. Cyprian and Ambrose, and Tertullian, wrote for women. He notices the honor paid by St. Augustine to the philosophy of his mother, and how St. Jerome was surrounded by Christian matrons full of eagerness for learning, and wrote letters to Læta and Gaudentius on the education of daughters. St.

Catharine of Alexandria told her judges that she had applied herself to every branch of rhetoric, philosophy, geometry, and other sciences. St. Clement of Alexandria writes of some Grecian ladies who had occupied themselves in the study of literature, science, and philosophy. The papal University of Bologna had on its roll learned women, and one called Maria Agnese was named professor of mathematics by a Pope. SS. Paula, Gertrude, Catharine of Siena, Teresa, and others might also be named. It must, however, be borne in mind that nearly all these were exceptional cases.... The practical question is, would such (higher) studies be likely to educate girls to be as the valiant woman in her house, or would they rather prevent her from becoming such?

Human respect has something to do with girls who attempt studies which are above them. Some few girls of *exceptional talents*, and others just capable of getting a smattering of higher studies, go in for them; and then parents, who do not like to think that their children are not clever, but who wish them to be on a level with those mentioned above, insist that their daughters follow their example. With what results? Well, as has been often said, with the baneful results that other more necessary and useful studies, of which they were capable, have been neglected; and that they become what may be fairly called muddle-headed by attempting a study for which they have no talent.

Fénelon dreaded, above all, women too learned in theology, and with good reason, for some such helped to get the great Archbishop of Cambrai into difficulties; besides, downright poor theologians women would make, because not intended or gifted by God for such a study. "I would much prefer," he says, "that she should be well versed in the housekeeping and accounts than in the dispute of theologians about grace." At the same time, a really solid knowledge of the catechism, philosophy, and theology of a *certain kind*, ought to hold a prominent place in the education of girls. Their teachers should instruct

them in the great foundation truths of Christianity; in the defined dogmas of the Church; in the principles and practices which they should esteem if they are to be good children of the Church; also in the strongest and easiest-understood arguments in favor of these; all given, however, in a manner at once interesting and suited to their capacity.

5. The Blessing from Above.



In the days of the Jewish king Ahab, the fountains of heaven were closed for the space of three years. During all this time no rain fell, so that the rivers and springs were dried up, and men and beasts died of thirst. At length the prophet Elias ascended to the summit of Mount Carmel and earnestly besought God to send rain upon the earth. Then, as we read in Scripture, “the heaven grew dark with clouds and wind, and there fell a great rain.”

A similar occurrence took place on the day of Pentecost; the spiritual rain of those celestial graces which are shed abroad by the Holy Ghost was poured down at Jerusalem. It refreshed and animated the hearts of the followers of Jesus, so that they at once began to blossom and bear rich and abundant fruit.

To parents and families is committed the difficult and important task of training children aright. In order to do this they need that heavenly rain, the blessing from above, the fertilizing grace of the Holy Spirit. But how are they to obtain this blessing? They must do the same as Elias did on the summit of Carmel, as the disciples of the Lord did before the feast of Pentecost. Of these latter we read: “They were all together in one place.” And elsewhere it is said: “All these were persevering with one mind in prayer.” Through prayer, and through prayer alone, did Elias obtain the natural rain from above, and by the same means the disciples of Jesus obtained the supernatural blessing, the grace of the Holy Ghost. Those who have to undertake the great work of education can obtain the blessing from above, the grace of the Holy Ghost, only by means of

prayer.

It is well known that what is planted in youth bears fruit in old age. Habit becomes a second nature. Those who have learned in their childhood to pray aright will not finally be lost though they may wander for a time from the right way. But suppose through the carelessness of teachers a child should not have learned how to pray—he may be lost; in this case the guilt will be laid at their door!

When the apostle St. John was upon one occasion visiting a Christian community, he saw a promising youth who as yet had not been baptized. He sought to win him over to Christianity, and said to the bishop of the place: “Look after this young man. I commit him to thy care in the presence of Jesus Christ and of this entire community.”

The bishop took the greatest pains with him, but only until he was baptized; after that his zeal grew cold. The young man got into bad company; he went so far as to join a band of highwaymen, and became their chief. Some years later St. John revisited the same community and asked the bishop to give him an account of the young man who had been confided to his care. The bishop cast down his eyes, and said: “Alas! he is dead!” “Dead, do you say?” exclaimed the apostle, “and what death did he die?” “He is dead in the sight of God,” replied the bishop; “he became a scoundrel, a highwayman!” On hearing these words St. John wept aloud, crying out: “Alas! to what a keeper did I entrust the soul of my brother!”

The child is also a pledge, like this young man, a pledge which God confides to its parents in the presence of Jesus Christ and of His Church, in order that it may be cherished and cared for. In their hands He has placed it; from their hands will He require it again. When, on the great day of final account, they stand before His judgment-seat, He will address to them this question: “Parents, where are your children, where are the souls I committed to your care?” Woe to the

parents if, like that bishop, they are compelled to reply: "They are dead, dead in the sight of God, lost to heaven, and all through our fault!"

Therefore must parents and teachers keep those entrusted to their care from evil, by precept and example, by watchfulness and punishment; they must lead them in the path of virtue on the road to heaven.

In so doing they must not forget the most important thing of all—they must pray with the child and for the child. They must begin and end with prayer, for without this all their efforts will avail little or nothing. Only by praying with and for the child can its heart be raised to God, can it be led on the road to heaven, to eternal blessedness. Prayer is sometimes the only means which can be employed to save a child. When, for instance, a son or a daughter has already entered upon a course of sin, no advice, no warnings can be of any more avail, and their age renders the infliction of any form of punishment entirely out of the question. In such a case what remains but prayer?

A mother had an only, darling son, who, though full of promise, was the child of many sorrows. For when the gifted boy grew to be a young man he followed in the steps of his heathen father. Before he was sixteen he lost his innocence, and sank deeper and deeper in sin. A few years later he even went so far as to boast of his wickedness. This was a bitter grief indeed for his unhappy mother! But Monica was a Christian; she was more than this—she was a saint. For sixteen long years she prayed most earnestly for the conversion of her son. So fervent were her petitions that a holy bishop said to her: "The child of so many prayers and tears can never be lost." And since she persevered with confidence in prayer, from a great sinner Augustine her son became a great saint.

But how is the blessing from above to be sought; in what way ought prayer to be made? First and foremost *family*

prayer in the household is necessary. Thanks be to God that this pious custom of having daily prayers in common is observed in many families: although in numerous others it is totally neglected.

Yet it is family prayer which imparts to the household a truly Christian character, and procures for it happiness and blessings. Such prayer as this unites all hearts; it is a sight to rejoice the angels, a sweet, melodious sound in the ear of God.

A family which thus prays is a strong tower against which no hostile efforts can prevail. In the course of time the children must go forth into the world and be exposed to a thousand dangers and temptations. They can no longer hear the affectionate entreaties of their mother, the grave warnings of their father; one thing must, however, always remain with them—the impression of the pious life which was led and the prayers which were said so fervently and regularly in their parents' house.

My dear child, you will probably have to occupy yourself at a later period in one way or another with the training of children; this should furnish you with an additional reason for learning at the present time to love prayer and to be diligent in its practice. A great variety of oral prayers and devotional exercises is not so important as the inward spirit of prayer, the conviction of its necessity, the confidence in its power. Such is the spirit in which the training of children ought to be conducted.

*O Christian parents, my counsel heed:
In your children's hearts implant good seed;
God's blessing will on your household rest
If truly you follow His behest.*



The Housewife's Adorning.

1. Beautiful Apparel.



Happiness or misery, peace or disquiet, the good or bad training of the children—all depend in the first place on the wife and mother. If the husband be ever so vicious and irreligious, the family will yet go on comparatively well if the mother is truly good, pious, and intelligent. If, on the contrary, the mother is shiftless and unfaithful to her duties, the prospects are bad for the family no matter how saintly the father may be. No better description of a model housewife can possibly be found than that which the Holy Ghost gives us in the Proverbs of Solomon. In the 31st chapter we read as follows: “Who shall find a valiant woman? the price of her is as of things brought from afar off and from the uttermost coasts. The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils. She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is good; her lamp shall not be put out in the night. She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She hath looked well to the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle. Her children rose up, and called

her blessed; her husband, and he praised her. Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.”

This description furnishes us with a lifelike portrait of the industrious housewife, occupied, as she constantly is, in keeping her house in good order, and pleasing her husband.

What a thoroughly efficient and sensible housewife can accomplish is not to be told in words. And I do not hesitate to say that the husband and children can not go wrong for any length of time when the mother understands how to strike the right chord, and to be a pattern of quiet industry and peaceful, thrifty domesticity.

Great and exalted therefore is the dignity of a mother. Of the glorious titles we give to the Blessed Virgin Mary, one of the greatest is, “Mother of the Son of God.” This title shines as does the sun among the stars. And what sound is more melodious in our ears than the sweet name of mother?

What does not a mother do and suffer? Amid pain, anxiety, and care she tends her child, she watches beside it day and night, she prays for its physical and mental well-being, she thinks of it at all times. She makes the child what it is. A wise bishop went so far as to say that the education of a child begins and ends in its mother’s lap. Therefore this precious garb of her dignity is the pride of every Christian housewife and mother. And for the sake of this dignity she gladly renounces the glitter and fame of public life, the strenuous joys and distracting vanities of the world.

The mother’s dignity, the mother’s love, have ever been respected and extolled in all ages and among all nations, civilized or uncivilized, Christian or pagan. This is proved by the numerous proverbs and quaint rhymes which are found belonging to all times and all climes, such as the following:

*“The mother is old
But her love is not cold;
Be he wayward and wild
Yet she dotes on her child.”*

“A mother’s love is new every morning.”

“Better lose a rich father than a poor mother.”

“Without a mother,” say the Russians, “the children are lost as much as bees without their queen.”

In nearly all countries one meets with some popular saying to the effect that “a poor mother will support seven children sooner than seven children will support their mother.”

These examples might be multiplied indefinitely; the truths they express may well fill the maternal heart with joy and pride.

The robe of maternal dignity appears especially precious when we think of the glorious reward which is the portion of the good Christian mother. Her reward will indeed be great both on earth and in eternity.

Children, as a rule, cling to their mother and love her with grateful and abiding affection. The little child gives proof of this as soon as it begins to walk. How it clings to its mother’s gown, and follows her step by step! And do not you, my dear daughter, place implicit confidence in your mother because you know that she always has your best interests at heart? Do you not confide the inmost secrets of your heart to your mother? Even grown-up sons and daughters, when they think of marrying, seek advice from their mother in preference to any one else.

This confidence is based upon an ordinance of divine providence, and only in God and the saints ought children to place greater confidence than they do in their mother.

And how glorious a reward awaits the good, faithful Christian mother on the other side of the grave. Our good God, with Mary and all the angels and saints, will welcome a soul adorned with the twofold robe of sanctifying grace and the dignity of a pious, Christian mother. Great indeed will be her reward in heaven.

My dear child, let the consideration of the dignity of a Christian mother furnish you with a fresh motive for esteeming your own mother all the more highly, for loving her all the more dearly, for striving all the more earnestly to give her pleasure. Above all, remain the faithful child of your heavenly Mother, of whom we speak in the familiar lines:

*A mother's love, how fond and true,
Never failing, daily new;
Mary, dearest Mother mine,
Be gracious to this child of thine.*

2. Gold Ornaments.



In order that woman may obtain firmness of character, strength for the fulfilment of her arduous duties, endurance for her toilsome life of self-sacrifice, she needs the true religious spirit and genuine piety. "Take religion away from woman," a French writer says, "and she is deprived of morality also; in that case she is nothing but a whited sepulchre, wherein abide corruption and decay." Especially does the *housewife* need religion to accomplish her lofty task, namely, to cultivate religion in her family, to instruct her children in its truths, and thus to become the priestess of the domestic shrine. Before everything else she must be adorned with the golden ornaments of true and fervent piety.

In the cemetery attached to the Church of St. Louis at Versailles (near Paris), this epitaph may be seen inscribed in large letters on the tombstone of a married woman: "*Domi mansit.*" This epitaph may be read thus: "She did her duty in the bosom of her family." These words imply also that she was genuinely religious, that she promoted true, unfeigned piety in her household, and strove with all her might to kindle the sacred flame of faith, of devotion, and of charity, in all the members of her family.

This is the first duty of every Christian wife. She ought to be a faithful follower of the Mother of God. And where will she find the Mother of God if she wishes to tread in her footsteps? At the foot of the cross on Calvary, and in the house of Nazareth. The Catholic wife must strive to imitate Mary in that house, and if she does this her soul will not be lacking in the

bright ornament of true piety. For in the house of Nazareth will the housewife learn to enter into and appreciate the inmost meaning of those words, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." And there will her heart, which is destined for sacrifice and anxiety, find strength to resist its own weakness; faith and piety will render it strong and invincible.

If the soul of a housewife is truly given to God, if grace perfects all that is best in her natural character, she becomes, if I may so speak, a magnet which draws all hearts to God. She preaches without words, and the more quiet and unobtrusive her influence is, the more effectually does it work. With gentle force she draws those around her to God, just as a beautiful portrait awakens pleasing recollections of a person whom you have dearly loved.

More yet does true piety effect in the life of a housewife. It gives her a strength which overcomes all opposition, a power of endurance which shrinks from no difficulties, a sweetness which makes bitter things pleasant, and causes her heart to become a fountain of perennial gladness.

It is no wonder that a housewife such as we have just described should excite surprise in worldlings, that they should marvel to behold her cheerfulness and patience under the most trying circumstances. They are ignorant of its cause; they know nothing of the ever-flowing stream of living faith which imparts to her new power, fresh strength and courage, increased confidence in God.

I will now give you, at some length, an account of a housewife such as I have described, one who was richly adorned with the jewels of true piety. Touched by grace, and brought to a knowledge of the truth, this woman led a pious life, serving God in word and in deed. Her husband, on the contrary, was an enemy of Christianity and the slave of sin. On the occasion of a carouse with his boon companions the conversation hap-

pened to turn upon the failings and the good qualities of women. He was never tired of praising his wife and descanting upon her merits. "She possesses every excellence which can possibly be found in a woman. She is really a model wife. But you must take her pious whims into the bargain. She has her passions and emotions under perfect control. If I were to take you, my friends, to my house at midnight, and bid her get up and prepare a meal for you, I bet that she would do it at once as cheerfully and pleasantly as possible."

Those present made a bet, challenging him to put to a test what he had just said. They repaired to his house at twelve o'clock at night. "Where is your mistress," the husband inquired of the maid servant. "She went to bed a long time ago," was the reply. "Call her, and tell her to get up at once and prepare luncheon for me and my friends." The wife arose without delay, greeted the company in the most cordial manner, and told them that the meal would soon be ready. When it was placed upon the table she waited upon the guests, just as if she had invited them and they had made their appearance at a perfectly convenient time.

At length they could no longer conceal their admiration. "Madam," said one of them, "your courtesy amazes us. Our appearance at this unusual hour is the result of a wager we laid with your husband; we have lost it. But pray tell us what it is which enables you to treat us in so friendly a manner, since you certainly cannot approve of our way of going on?"

She answered pleasantly: "Gentlemen, when my husband and I were married, we were both living in sin. It pleased God to arouse me from this state. My husband is still walking in the broad path, and I tremble for his future fate. Were he to die in his present condition how sad would be his lot on the other side of the grave! Therefore it is my duty at least to make his life here below as agreeable as possible."

All present were surprised and touched by this answer,

which made a great impression upon her husband. "My dear wife," he said, "are you really so concerned about my salvation? I thank you for your affectionate warning; with the help of God I will become a changed man." And he did indeed reform his manner of life; he became a true Christian and the best of husbands to the faithful wife, who, adorned with true and sincere piety, had so lovingly stood at his side.

In this instance we have exemplified the saying of St. Paul: "Godliness is profitable to all things." Therefore, my daughter, in whatever state of life you may be, endeavor to cultivate true and genuine piety. God has implanted piety in your heart. Ever bear in mind that the practice of true piety will not only win for you a rich store of merit in the world to come, but will also obtain the blessing of God in the present life. By cultivating true piety you will assuredly possess peace of heart, peace with God and man.

3. Diamonds.



Women, whether married or unmarried, love external ornament; they like to be well-dressed, to wear gold rings, bracelets, and necklaces set with precious stones. The housewife should indeed be decked with lovely gems, but her adorning should be inward—the adorning of the heart. By this is meant that the housewife ought to possess the virtues that are most necessary for family life—in particular, docility and patience. These housewifely virtues, her most becoming ornament, ought to be lasting and indestructible, emitting a bright and genial lustre, like two diamonds of the first water.

The first diamond in a wife's crown of virtues is *docility*. Eve was the first to commit sin and on her the sentence of punishment was passed first. The words of this sentence apply equally to all her feminine posterity: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."

The apostle Paul speaks most explicitly of the obedience due from a wife. In his Epistle to the Ephesians he says: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: Because the husband is the head of the wife; as Christ is the head of the Church."

In the household, therefore, the husband is lord and master, his wife, his children, the men servants and the maids are subject to him. Would that women knew how much wiser it is to rest content with the position God has assigned to them! How much dissension, how much vexation, how many disagreeable scenes in family life would thus be avoided!

Many a wife will say with more or less justice that her husband is stupid and tactless, without talent for business, and wanting in energy. In this case, the wife ought to endeavor to supply his deficiencies and in a gentle, kindly spirit, help him to manage his affairs, without any assumption of dictatorial authority.

Patience is another precious diamond in the Christian housewife's crown of virtues. A wife ought to know the character, the disposition, and the inclinations of her husband, and carefully avoid whatever excites him to anger. A misunderstanding and consequent contentions may arise, however, and lead to an outbreak of passion on the part of the husband. In that case, a good wife will not exasperate him still more by seeking to have the last word in the quarrel; a wise and discreet wife will try to restore peace and harmony as speedily as possible. She will not say: "The right is on my side."

All contentious persons persist in saying they are right. But the Christian housewife, who knows that self-denial is required of her, is content to lay her right on the altar of peace, and keep silence. A woman's most powerful weapon is patience, not vehemence. If she wants to rule, let her cultivate a sweet and gentle disposition. She can do nothing, gain nothing, by force, whereas with patient wisdom and wise patience she will succeed in getting her own way.

But I hear some wife or other say: "That is all very well, but how is one to keep one's patience with a man who is such a bad husband, who is addicted to drink, who squanders his money and is a regular tyrant?" Under such circumstances all a wife can do is to bear with her husband's bad ways in a spirit of penance, and earn for herself that happiness after death which is promised to the meek and to the peacemakers. Unless she views her trials in this light, she will have much to suffer here without the prospect of reward hereafter; nay more, she will have a twofold punishment, for her life will be a hell on

earth, and she will not escape the torment of hell for all eternity.

There is one thing more which a good wife can do for a bad husband—she can exert herself to the utmost for his conversion and never grow weary until her end is gained, after the example of St. Monica.

I heard recently of a truly Christian wife who acted in this way. The more rude and unkind her husband was, the more meek and gentle she became. At the same time she prayed constantly to God, with tears, imploring Him to touch her husband's heart and bring him to a better mind. What was the result? One morning the man said to his long-suffering wife: "Dear wife, we cannot go on in this way. You are an angel, and I am a very devil. We are ill-matched and cannot live together any longer as we have been doing. I have determined to abandon my evil ways, and from this day forth I mean to lead a new life, as becomes a Christian." The man kept his word. Thus we see how patience and endurance conquered at last.

You must not, however, think that docility and patience are virtues wherewith it behoves you to adorn yourself only in later years; on the contrary, they must be learned and practised in your youthful days. I have told you of this repeatedly and emphatically. Obedience is the virtue which the young pre-eminently ought to possess. See that you cultivate it, and practise it conscientiously in regard to your parents and superiors.

And since you will find that the bright roses of the spring-time of your life are not without thorns, the thorns of sorrows and vexations, abundant opportunity will be afforded you for the exercise of patience. Make good use of these occasions, and thus prepare to bear the sufferings of the days to come. Be patient!

*O praise thou the Lord, give thanks to His name,
With heart and with voice His goodness proclaim;
To Him have recourse whatever thy grief,
He will, the mighty One, bring thee relief.*

4. Precious Stones.



A learned prelate has well said: “Where God has set up an altar in the heart of the wife and mother, the whole house becomes a temple dedicated to His service.” Now, for that very reason the house at Nazareth where the holy family dwelt was a temple, since God had literally erected an altar, made an abode for Himself, in the heart of Joseph’s holy spouse. In a certain sense this ought to be true of every mother of a family. If the household is to be a happy one it is not enough for the father to be virtuous; it is equally, nay more important that the mother should be so too. And to complete her set of jewel-like virtues, besides the two diamonds of which we have spoken—docility and patience—she must possess three more bright, sparkling, and precious stones.

First and foremost is the bright red ruby of *conjugal affection*; it must, however, be the true, genuine love of a wife for her husband. What is too often the experience of those who have not long been married? As soon as they find out each other’s faults and failings, when the novelty has worn off, when toil and trouble and cares weigh upon them, then, as the saying is, love flies out of the window. “Would that I had never married!” many a young wife has been heard to say. But the truly Christian wife does not lose heart so easily. When the first passionate love has died out, it is replaced by a nobler, truer affection, one which death cannot destroy, and which lives beyond the grave. The virtuous wife will love her husband because God commands her to love him, because it is her duty to love him.

The early training of the children naturally falls chiefly to the wife and mother. On this account Almighty God has adorned her heart with a precious jewel, the crimson-hued jasper of *maternal love*. What the warm sunbeams are to a flower-garden, this love is to the soul of the little child. Many flowers unfold their blossoms only in the sun, and close them as soon as it ceases to shine. Children are, as it were, plants in the garden of the Lord, the Christian family. Love must, like the sun, warm their hearts, and cause their minds to open to what is good and true and beautiful. Wherefore the sun of a mother's love must never be obscured and darkened by the clouds of ill-temper or of low spirits; otherwise the happy heart of childhood will itself be overshadowed with gloom. On the other hand, how the child delights to look into the kindly, loving eyes of its mother, and how gladly it drinks in her teaching!

Thus the precious jewel of maternal love is a powerful factor in the early training of children. An experienced Christian author says: "A child's education is almost completed in the first five years spent at his mother's knee, in the sunshine of her love. Whatever qualities or tendencies are developed in him in after years, the seed of them was sown by his mother in his early childhood. The impressions made on the soft soil of the child's heart, so sensitive to all that is good and beautiful, are never obliterated all his life long."

Children who grow up without the fostering care of a mother's love very often become selfish, secretive, morose, ready for all sorts of tricks. Therefore the jasper of maternal affection ought to shine prominently amongst the jewels that adorn the mother of a family.

The same may be said of a third precious stone—the sky-blue turquoise of *love of order*. God Himself loves order. That is why He maintains that wonderful order which is observed in the universe, in all Nature. For man, too, order has a powerful

attraction; it contributes greatly to his comfort. It is to a great extent due to the strict order which prevails, even in the most minute details, in convents, that one finds more contented and cheerful individuals there than anywhere else. However small and poverty-stricken a house may appear, however simple and ordinary its inmates may be, if their family life is conducted in an orderly manner, if they are regular in their habits and everything is done at the right time and in the right place, that household will be a happy one, and one will feel himself at home there despite the plain surroundings.

But if in the household over which a young wife presides, cleanliness and order do not prevail, if everything is untidy and in confusion, there is no need to inquire what sort of person the mistress of that house is; one may take it for granted that she is quite incompetent and that but little happiness will be found in that family. For, as Chateaubriand says: "If happiness really exists here below, it is undoubtedly in an orderly, well-regulated family."

Look in imagination at the interior of the quiet house at Nazareth where the holy family dwelt. Would it not seem akin to blasphemy to suppose that the Blessed Virgin did not keep her house in perfect order? Everything in it was doubtless poor and simple, but spotlessly clean and neat. How inviting, how comfortable his home looked, when St. Joseph came back at eventide tired from his day's work. Joy filled his heart when the divine Child ran to meet him and his holy spouse stood at the door ready to welcome him. Had I a painter's skill, how much I should like to depict this charming scene in lifelike tints upon the canvas.

Only think what a sense of peace and happiness must steal over the heart of the husband when, after working hard all day, he comes home at night to be greeted with his wife's affectionate smile; when he finds his evening meal ready and every thing as orderly as possible. Love of order is certainly an es-

sential virtue in a wife.

But not only is it necessary for a wife, but for every woman, whether married or unmarried. See that you cultivate this virtue. Observation leads to the conclusion that love of order is an almost unfailing proof of the presence of other virtues, such as humility, obedience, and true charity towards one's neighbor. And at the same time, cleanliness, thrift, conscientiousness in the minutest details are inseparable from it. Love of order is generally characteristic of women, but it requires to be cultivated and brought into play in early youth if it is to stand her in good stead in after years. Therefore let me advise you to cultivate this virtue assiduously; and let your thoughts often travel to the holy house at Nazareth, that you may learn what family life ought to be.

Hymn to the Holy Family.

*Happy we, who thus united
Join in cheerful melody;
Praising Jesus, Mary, Joseph,
In the Holy Family.*

*Jesus, Mary, Joseph, help us.
That we ever true may be
To the promises that bind us
To the Holy Family.*

*Jesus, whose almighty bidding
All created things fulfil,
Lives on earth in meek subjection
To His earthly parents' will.*

*Sweetest Infant, make us patient
And obedient for Thy sake;
Teach us to be chaste and gentle,
All our stormy passions break.*

*Mary, thou alone wert chosen
To be Mother of my Lord;
Thou didst guide the early footsteps
Of the great Incarnate Word.*

*Dearest Mother, make us humble
For thy Son will take His rest
In the poor and lowly dwelling
Of a humble sinner's breast.*

*Joseph, thou wert called the father
Of thy Maker and thy Lord;
Thine it was to save thy Savior
From the cruel Herod's sword.*

*Suffer us to call thee father,
Show to us a father's love;
Lead us safe through every danger
Till we meet in heaven above.*

A Few Concluding Words



Botticelli's Flowers

A Few Concluding Words.

1. Farewell!



The fond father and mother have crossed the threshold of their house to accompany their daughter a few steps on her way, now that she is about to leave home and go out into the world. She is sixteen years old, and long beforehand her excellent parents have prepared her for this important and critical step; many useful instructions, good advice, and practical hints have they given her for the guidance of her daily life. Now the sorrowful moment of parting has come, they repeat with anxious hearts some of the most serious and weighty admonitions. And when the last farewell is spoken, and the hot tears can no longer be repressed, they say: “Dearest child, never forget our parting words. Remember them in the season of temptation and danger. May God bless you abundantly, and give His holy angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.”

Then the girl goes on her way. But for a long time her parents stand looking after her, their loving hearts wrung, with

inexpressible grief. Involuntarily they ask themselves the anxious question: Will our daughter come back to us as good and pious and innocent as she now is?

In this picture I have portrayed for you, Christian maiden, the thoughts and feelings of my own heart, now that I have come to the end of my instructions. You have followed me attentively and patiently on the long and toilsome way, over many a stone of “must” and “ought,” through the regions of serious duty, so unattractive to the natural man. You have a good will and would gladly profit by the salutary counsels and hints which I have given you in the preceding pages.

Well, then, I offer you this manual as a companion in your daily life. It rests with you to be reminded by it at any and every moment of what you ought to do and of what you ought to leave undone; you must simply turn to it for counsel by reading it carefully and repeatedly.

But in order to make it easier for you to remember what you have learned, I will now do as the parents of whom I have here spoken did on taking leave of their daughter. As my farewell word I will briefly sum up all that I have said, under eight heads. You must impress them indelibly on your memory as resolutions to be carried out and adhered to faithfully throughout your life.

Resolution the first: I will be careful to say my daily prayers regularly, and never to omit hearing Mass on Sundays and holidays without absolute necessity.

This resolution may be epitomized in one word: *Prayer*.

Prayer is the pivot on which the spiritual life of every Christian, and certainly of every Catholic girl, revolves; prayer is the very breath of the soul, its vital breath.

Resolution the second: I will make it my practice to go to the sacraments at least once every month.

Here you may impress on your mind the word:
Sacraments.

Confession and Communion constitute a never failing source, a fount, whereby the life of the soul may be evermore renewed, maintained, and strengthened. Must not every young person whose spiritual life is so often in danger feel herself impelled by a holy thirst to draw water out of the Savior's fountains?

Resolution the third: I will scrupulously shun every thing likely to prove dangerous to purity. I will be on my guard against curiosity, vanity, undue familiarity with young men, improper conversation, and immoral books.

O pearl of virtues—Innocence! Purity! Let these sweet names remind you, my child, of the precious treasure you possess, and warn you to protect it, to keep it at any cost!

Resolution the fourth: In confession, I will always be conscientious and candid in regard to the sixth and ninth commandments. I will therefore tell my confessor when any suitor for my hand presents himself, as soon, in fact, as I begin "to keep company."

Yes, make it your principle to be candid and outspoken in confession, for this candor will be your safeguard.

Resolution the fifth: In regard to going to dances, or plays of a doubtful nature, I will always ask and follow the advice of my spiritual director.

This caution in the matter of dances and plays appertains to the extreme care and earnestness which is indispensable for preserving your purity.

Resolution the sixth: I will endeavor always to please my parents and superiors by prompt obedience, a cheerful demeanor, and industry at my work.

To keep the fourth commandment faithfully in regard to

parents and superiors means for the Christian Maiden that she is placing out at compound interest a large capital of temporal and eternal happiness, as one might say, making God Himself her debtor.

Resolution the seventh: I will be very cautious in reading novels and worldly periodicals, and content myself with a small number.

Reading anti-Christian or immoral books is as fatal to the soul as slow, deadly poison is to the body. And how widespread is this poison, how constantly we meet with it. Unfortunately the vessels that contain it have no label with a death's-head to serve as a warning; on the contrary, they bear the most attractive inscriptions. Therefore be cautious in your selection of light literature and of reading-matter in general.

Resolution the eighth: I will endeavor very earnestly to live at peace with all men, and for this end I will carefully avoid dissimulation and uncharitableness in word and action.

Charity toward our neighbor is the second great commandment, which Our Lord declares to be like unto the first and greatest: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Every kind of deceit and unkindness is incompatible with true love of our neighbor.

In conclusion, let me once more impress these resolutions on your mind, with the words which Tobias the elder addressed to his son: "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin. Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. Seek counsel always of a wise man." For you, this wise man will be your confessor. Finally, my last farewell shall be uttered in the words of Tobias, when his son was about to start on his journey: "May you have a good journey and God be with you in your way, and his angel accompany you."

*May thy life flow, a sacred stream,
In whose calm depths the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirrored; which, though shapes of ill
Should hover round its surface, glides in light,
And takes no shadow from them.*

“Our care should be not so much to live *long* as to live *well*.”

—Seneca.

“Time flies, death urges, knells call, heaven invites, hell threatens.”

—Young.

“Then let us fill
This little interval, this pause of life
With all the virtues we can crowd into it.”

—Addison.

*“Live while you live, the epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day;
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my views let both united be;
I live in pleasure, when I live in Thee.”*

—Philip Doddridge.

2. A Rule of Life.



“He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.”

D*aily Conduct.*—Have a fixed hour for rising in the morning; bless yourself with holy water, and as soon as possible after your toilet recite devoutly your morning prayers. During the day make at least a short meditation or a spiritual reading. It is commendable to read daily from the *Lives of the Saints*. Hear Mass; make a visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. If you cannot go to church, make your visit and adoration at home, turning toward the nearest tabernacle and receiving holy communion spiritually. Recite the *Angelus*; say the beads. In the evening, examine your conscience and recite your evening prayers.

Confession and Communion.—Receive the holy sacraments frequently—once a week or, certainly, once a month. Go as often as you can to holy communion, with the advice of your spiritual director. Choose a learned and pious confessor, and be directed always by him in all affairs of importance. When you commit any sin, make an act of contrition immediately and resolve to amend; if it is a mortal sin, confess it as soon as possible.

Occasions of Sin.—Avoid idleness, bad companions, low theatres and public balls, round dances, immoral books, sensational newspapers, salacious literature, foolish novels and romances, games of chance, and every occasion of sin. In temptations, bless yourself, invoke the most holy names of Je-

sus and Mary, and think of death. "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."

Sundays.—"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day." Be not satisfied with hearing a Low Mass on Sundays. Hear sermons as often as possible, and listen attentively to the word of God. No matter how poor an orator or preacher a priest may be, no matter how plain his language or how unattractive his delivery, remember that he is the representative of Christ, and that you can always find in every sermon sufficient matter for reflection and application to your own life and circumstances. Faithfully attend the meetings of the sodality, and never absent yourself unnecessarily from afternoon or evening services and benediction.

Pious Practices.—Keep yourself in the presence of God. Accustom yourself to saying short ejaculatory and indulgenced prayers. Keep a crucifix, holy pictures, and holy water in your room. Carry your beads with you. Wear a scapular, and a medal of the Immaculate Conception. Support your parish priest and your parish church in all good works. Help the poor and the orphans according to your means. Frequently think of death and eternity.

Blessed Virgin Mary.—If you love Jesus, you will love and honor His blessed Mother. Be most devout to her and daily perform some acts of piety in her honor. A pious *Child of Mary* will erect a *home-altar* in honor of her heavenly Queen and Mother, before which she will recite her prayers. On Our Lady's feast-days she will place an offering of fresh flowers on this altar. Hear Mass and receive holy communion on the great feasts of the Blessed Virgin. Daily renew your act of consecration and say the *Memorare* for a happy death. Cultivate her virtues, especially purity, modesty, meekness, humility, obedience, charity, patience, resignation to the will of God, and devotedness to duty.

Retreat.—Make a spiritual retreat once a year.

Spiritual Communion.—An act of spiritual communion like the following should be made frequently, and especially at Mass: “My Jesus, I believe that Thou art truly present in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I adore Thee. I praise Thee and thank Thee for all Thy blessings. I am sorry that I have offended Thee by my sins. By this act I wish to make reparation to Thee for all the insults and injuries committed against Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love. I love Thee with my whole heart. Come to my poor soul; unite Thyself to me...✠...I thank Thee, my good Jesus. Oh! never, never leave me. Let me not be separated from thee by sin.”

In the Hour of Death.—When you are dying, make acts of contrition and of love. Pronounce the sweet and holy name of “Jesus.”

In life and in death, praise and be submissive to the holy will of God.

Strive to become a saint. For “this is the will of God, your sanctification.”

3. The Art of Being Happy.*



I.

What must we do to be happy? The thing is not hard. Much knowledge is not necessary for this, nor much talent, but only a real good will to do one's duty. Happiness, as far as it can exist here below, consists in peace, in the joy of a good conscience. Our conscience will be joyous and peaceful if it know not remorse; it will not know remorse if we are careful not to offend God. To fly from sin is, therefore, the chief source of happiness on earth. If our conscience is pure, our life will be happy. There are none happier than saints, for there are none more innocent.

II.

What is it that secures happiness in a home? Before everything, religion: let all love well our good God, let all say their prayers morning and night, let all put their trust in divine providence. In the next place, union: let the members of the household be affectionate toward one another, having only one heart and one soul, not saying or doing anything that may pain any one of them. Then again, the spirit of sacrifice: we must be ready to do without something in order to make another member of the family enjoy it, we must give up our own personal tastes to conform to the tastes of others. Finally, pliancy of character: not to be hard to deal with, touchy, sour, proud;

* From the French by the Rev. Matthew Russell, S.J.

not to be obstinately rooted in one's ideas, not to grow impatient about mere nothings, but to have a large mind and a generous heart. A family whose members possess these qualities is a paradise on earth.

III.

There is a word which cannot be said too often to every Christian whom God has destined to live, converse, and labor in the society of his fellow creatures: Be *indulgent*. Yes, be indulgent; it is necessary for others, and it is necessary for your own sake. Forget the little troubles that others may cause you; keep up no resentment for the inconsiderate or unfavorable words that may have been said about you; excuse the mistakes and awkward blunders of which you are the victim; always make out good intentions for those who have done you any wrong by imprudent acts or speeches; in a word, smile at everything, show a pleasant face on all occasions; maintain an inexhaustible fund of goodness, patience, and gentleness. Thus you will be at peace with all your brethren; your love for them will suffer no alteration, and their love for you will increase day by day. But above all, you will practice in an excellent manner, Christian charity, which is impossible without this toleration and indulgence at every instant.

“I have sought for happiness in the brilliant haunts of society, in sumptuous banquets, in the glare of theatres. I have sought it again in the possession of gold, in the excitement of the gaming-table, in the illusions of romance; but all in vain—whilst an hour passed in visiting a sick person, or in consoling some afflicted one, has been enough to give me enjoyment more delightful than all delights.”

—*Anonymous.*

IV.

Flattery is never worth anything; but to give a little praise at the right moment to some one under us is an excellent way of encouraging him and giving him a pleasure as sweet as it is salutary. For this a mere “thank you” is enough, an approving smile, a kind look, or even a simple word, such as these: “I am greatly pleased” “that has succeeded very well” “this is precisely what I wanted,” etc. Why should we always keep up an air of indifference and coldness toward workmen, servants, children, opening our mouths only when we have some rebuke to give them? Is this charitable? Is this Christian? Let us put ourselves in the place of these inferiors, and let us be happy in making them happy. Let us show ourselves satisfied with their good will and make them understand that we love them. Not only will they serve us much better and attach themselves to us with true devotedness, but we shall thus gain their hearts, and it will then be easy for us to secure their fidelity to the duties of religion and the fulfilment of the practices of Christian piety.

V.

Economy is praiseworthy; stinginess is not: it contracts the heart of a man and makes him miserable. Pious persons must be on their guard against this snare of the devil, for many are caught in it without knowing. Some persons will give several dollars to a beggar, and an hour after they will haggle about three pennies with an honest workman, or go on bargaining about some worthless object. Pious Catholics ought not to let it be said that they are harder and fonder of money than other people! they ought not to be afflicted by or bewail any little losses that they may suffer. Let us be economical when there is question of our pleasures, of our table, or of our dress; but let us be large-hearted and generous in all our relations with others.

VI.

A poet was gazing one day at a beautiful rose-tree. "What a pity," said he, "that these roses have thorns!" A man who was passing by said to him: "Let us rather thank our good God for having allowed these thorns to have roses." Ah! how ought we also to thank Him for so many joys that He grants to us in spite of our sins, instead of complaining about the slight troubles that He sends us!

VII.

Let us do good, let us avoid evil, and we shall be happy. "There is but one way," said a man of genius, "of being happy, and it is to do well all one's duties."

VIII.

How sweet and agreeable an occupation it is to give pleasure to those around us! It is quite natural amongst Christians, but it becomes almost a duty amongst the members of a family or a community, especially toward persons whom age or rank places above us. And, to give pleasure, what is necessary? Things the most insignificant, provided they be accompanied by amiable manners; what is necessary above all is to have habitually a smile on our lips. Oh! who can tell the power of a smile? For ourselves, it is the guardian of kindness, patience, tolerance, all the virtues that we have occasion to exercise in our relations with our neighbor. There is, in fact, no danger of our being rude or severe so long as a smile rests on our lips. For others, it is a source of contentment, joy, satisfaction, and encouragement. Without even uttering a single word we put those around us at their ease; we inspire them with a sweet confidence, if we approach them with a smile. Perhaps you will object that you cannot smile, that you are naturally serious or even severe. Undeceive yourself: with real good will you will

acquire this empire over yourself, you will soon do by custom what you at first did by constraint; and the interior joy that you taste will recompense you superabundantly for your trouble and your efforts.

IX.

A great secret for preserving peace of heart is to do nothing with overeagerness, but to act always calmly, without trouble or disquiet. We are not asked to do much, but to do well. At the Last Day God will not examine whether we have performed a multitude of works, but whether we have sanctified our souls in doing them. Now the means of sanctifying ourselves is to do everything for God and to do perfectly whatever we have to do. The works that have as their motive vanity or selfishness make us neither better nor happier, and we shall receive no reward for them.

X.

“I feel happy,” said a holy person, “in proportion as I do my actions well.” Let us meditate an instant on this luminous saying. To do well what one has to do—here again is the secret of being happy. Every man, then, can be happy; and, if we have not been happy hitherto, it is because we have not put this lesson into practice. But what is necessary for this? Oh, very little. To do every action with a view of pleasing God; to do every action in the manner that God commands, either through Himself or through those who hold His place in our regard; to do every action as if we had nothing else to do but this, and as if we were to die after having done it.

XI.

There are some who are affable and gracious to every one

as long as things go according to their wishes; but if they meet with a contradiction, if an accident, a reproach, or even less should trouble the serenity of their soul, all around them must suffer the consequences. They grow dark and cross; very far from keeping up the conversation by their good humor, they answer only in monosyllables to those who speak to them. Is this conduct reasonable? Is it Christian? Let us always be kind and good-humored so as always to make our brethren happy, and we shall merit to be always made happy by God.

XII.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the clean of heart, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you for My sake.

—*St. Matthew 5:3-11.*

Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.

—*St. Luke 11:28.*

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.

—*St. James 1:12.*

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

—*Apocalypse 14:13.*

